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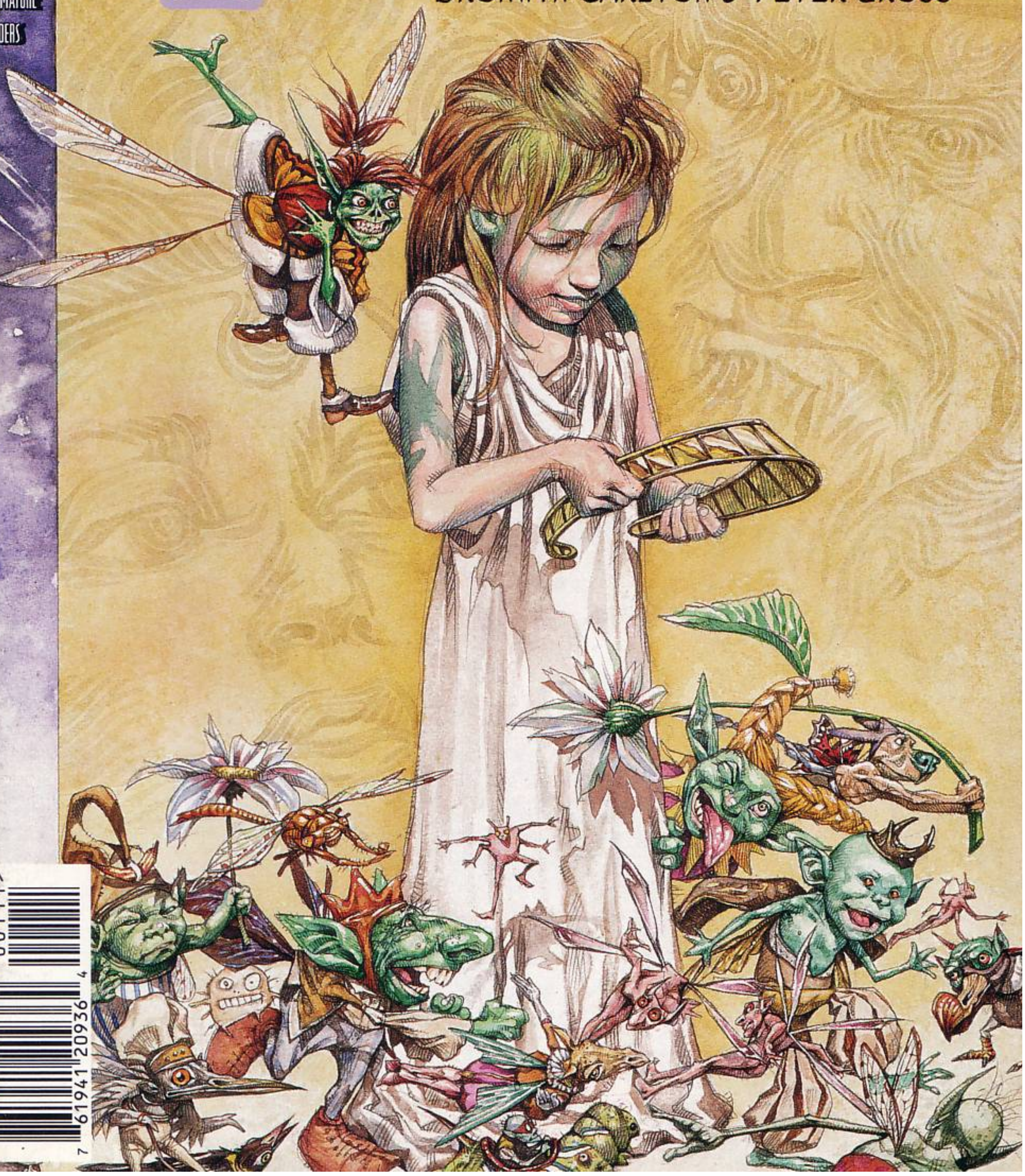
The Books of FAERIE™

BRONWYN CARLTON & PETER GROSS



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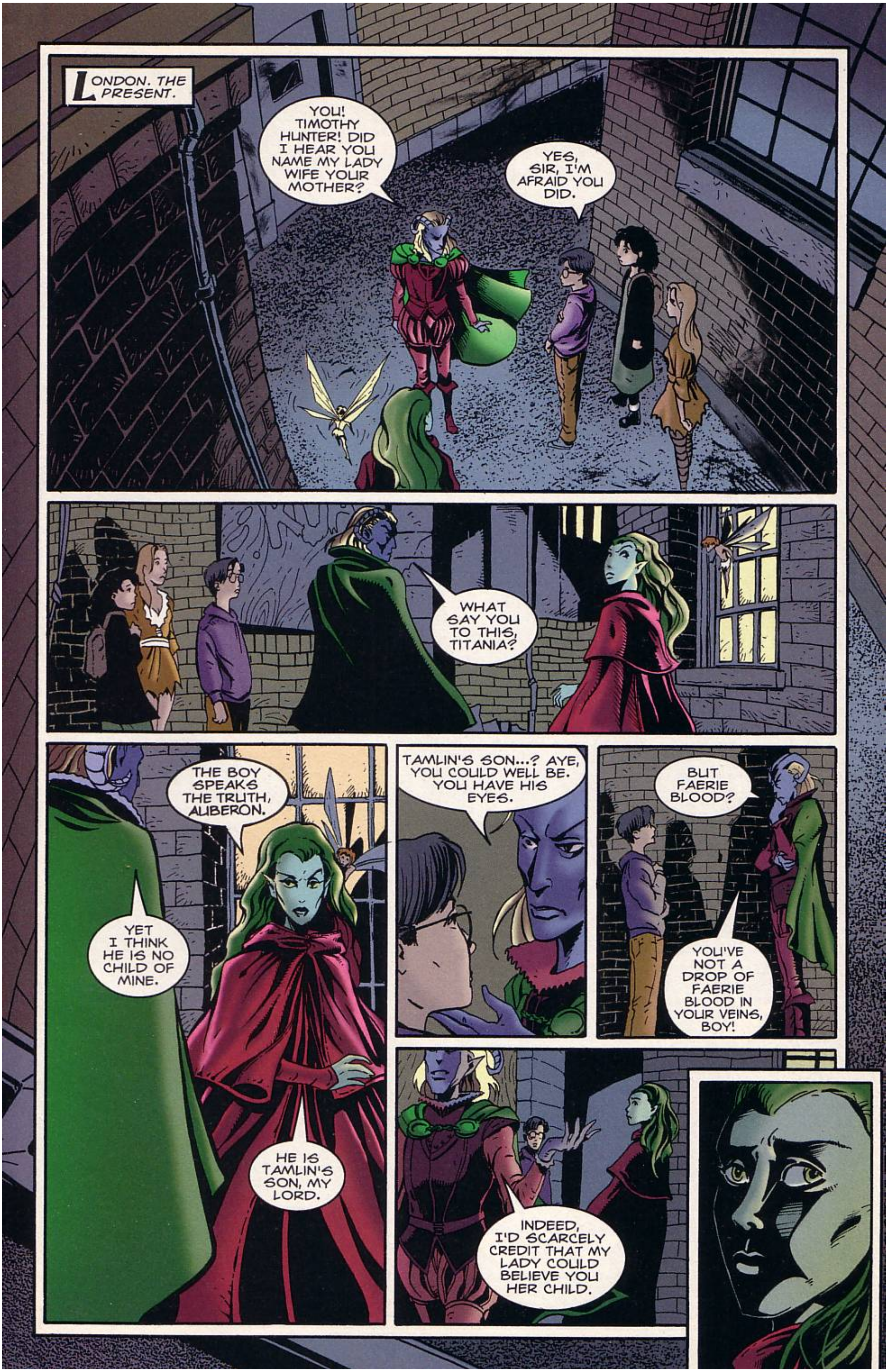
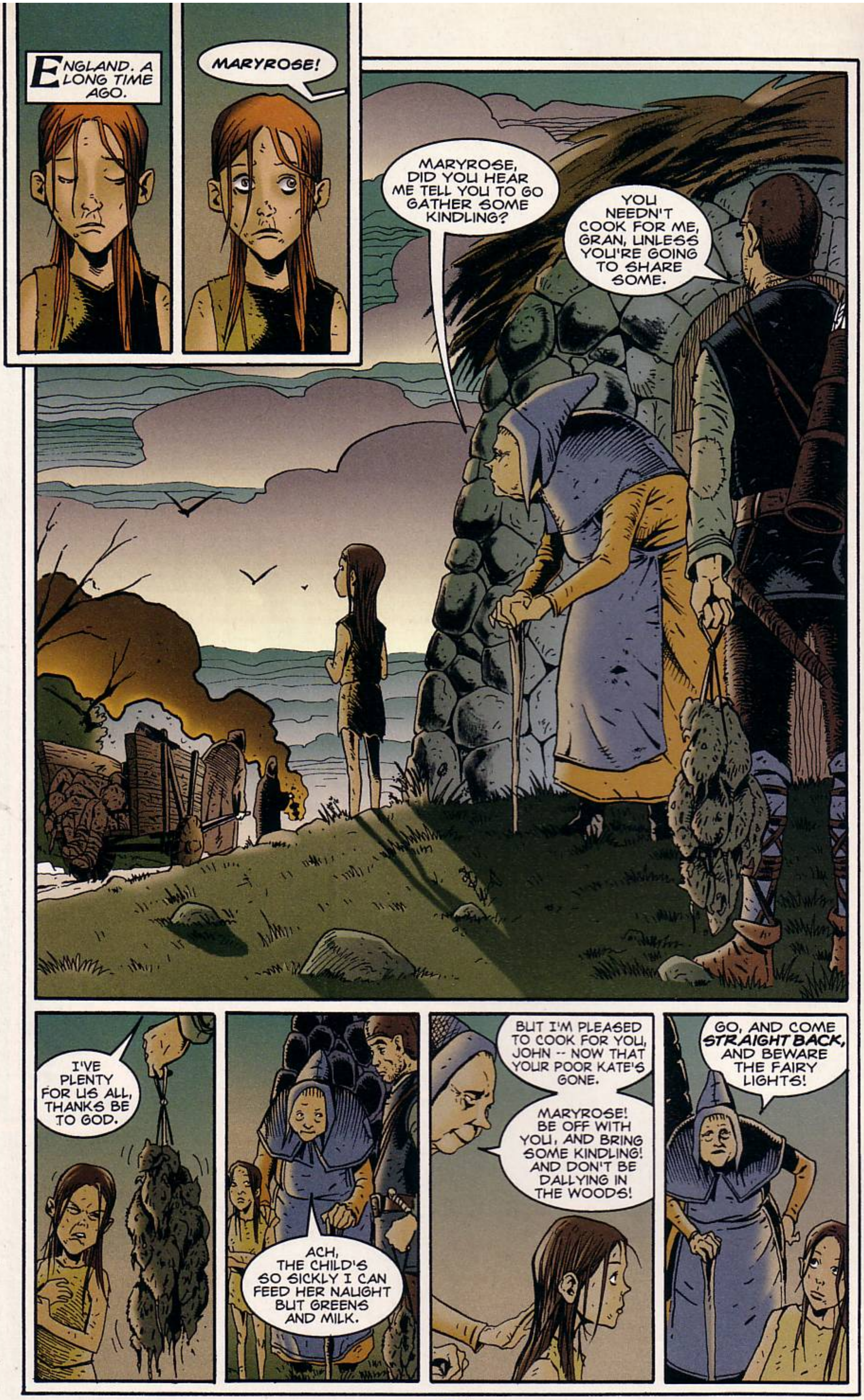
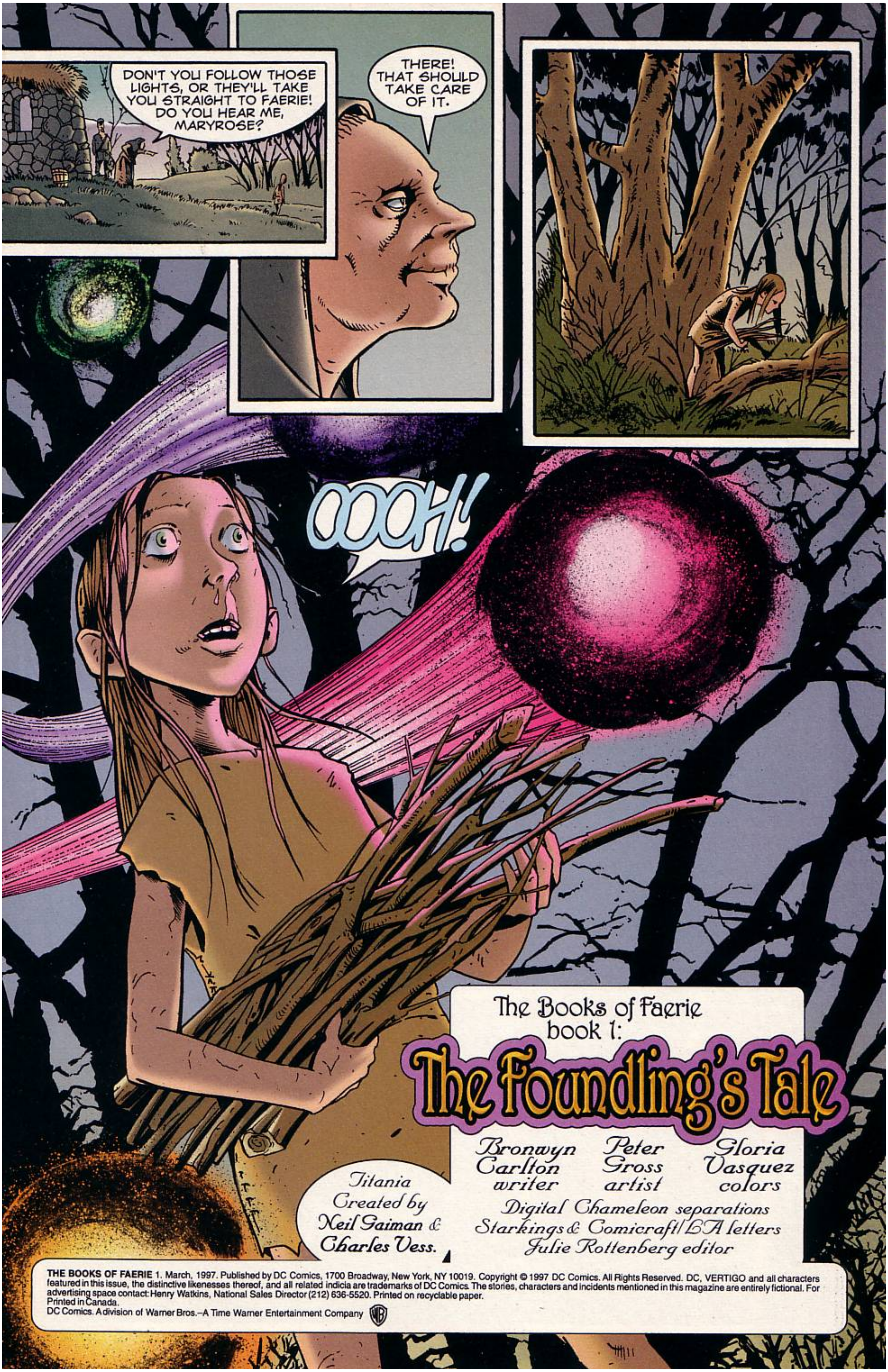

LONDON. THE PRESENT.
YOU! TIMOTHY HUNTER! DID I HEAR YOU NAME MY LADY WIFE YOUR MOTHER?
YES, SIR, I'M AFRAID YOU DID.
WHAT SAY YOU TO THIS, TITANIA?
THE BOY SPEAKS THE TRUTH, AUBERON.
YET I THINK HE IS NO CHILD OF MINE.
HE IS TAMLIN'S SON, MY LORD.
TAMLIN'S SON...? AYE, YOU COULD WELL BE. YOU HAVE HIS EYES.
BUT FAERIE BLOOD?
YOU'VE NOT A DROP OF FAERIE BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS, BOY!
INDEED, I'D SCARCELY CREDIT THAT MY LADY COULD BELIEVE YOU HER CHILD.


ENGLAND. A LONG TIME AGO.
MARYROSE!
MARYROSE, DID YOU HEAR ME TELL YOU TO GO GATHER SOME KINDLING?
YOU NEEDN'T COOK FOR ME, GRAN, UNLESS YOU'RE GOING TO SHARE SOME.
I'VE PLENTY FOR US ALL, THANKS BE TO GOD.
ACH, THE CHILD'S SO SICKLY I CAN FEED HER NAUGHT BUT GREENS AND MILK.
BUT I'M PLEASED TO COOK FOR YOU, JOHN -- NOW THAT YOUR POOR KATE'S GONE.
MARYROSE! BE OFF WITH YOU, AND BRING SOME KINDLING! AND DON'T BE DALLYING IN THE WOODS!
GO, AND COME STRAIGHT BACK, AND BEWARE THE FAIRY LIGHTS!



DON'T YOU FOLLOW THOSE LIGHTS, OR THEY'LL TAKE YOU STRAIGHT TO FAERIE! DO YOU HEAR ME, MARYROSE?
THERE! THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF IT.
OOOH!

The Books of Faerie
book 1:

The Foundling's Tale

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Gloria Vasquez colors
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Starkings & Comicraft/LA letters
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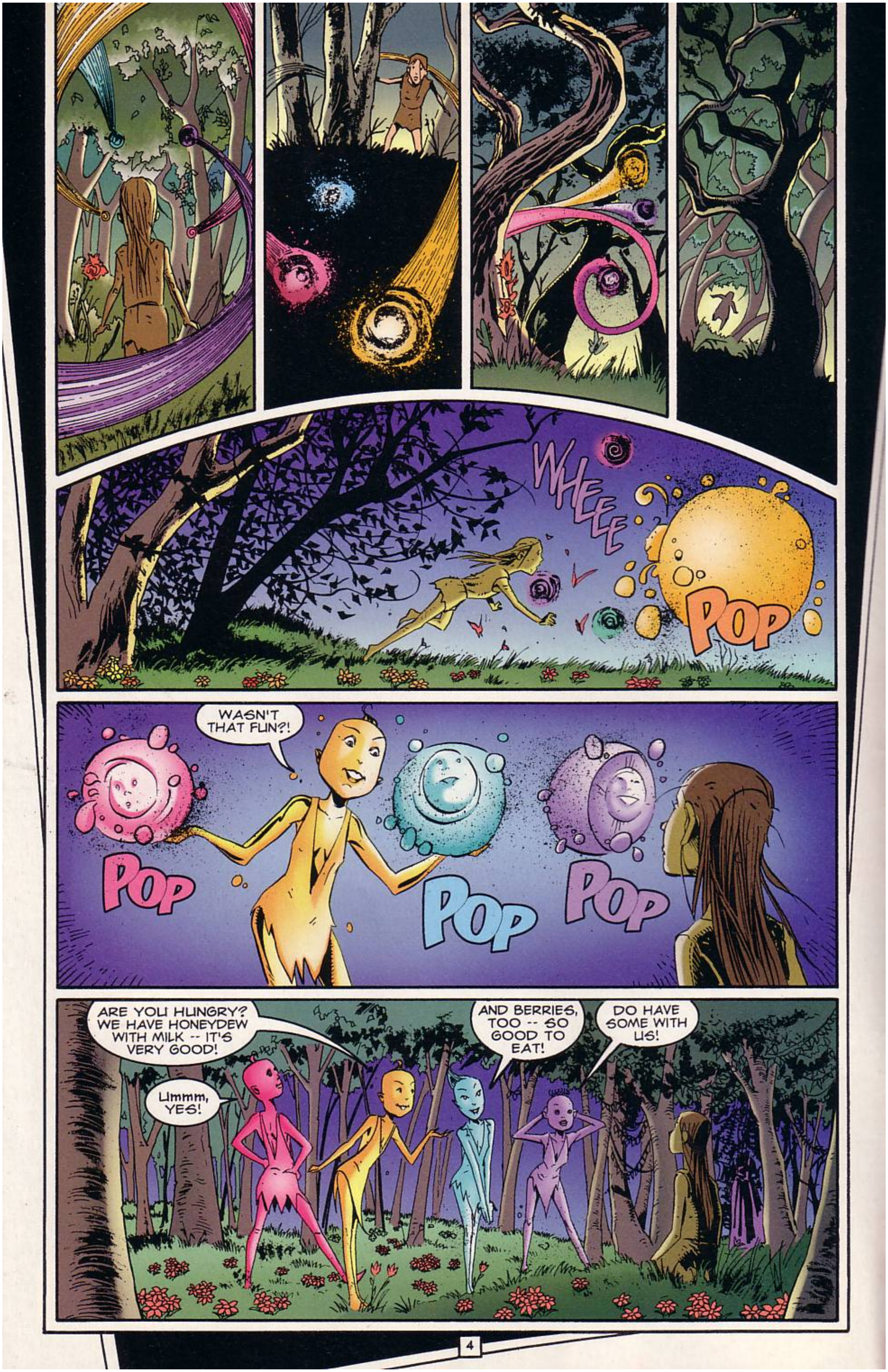
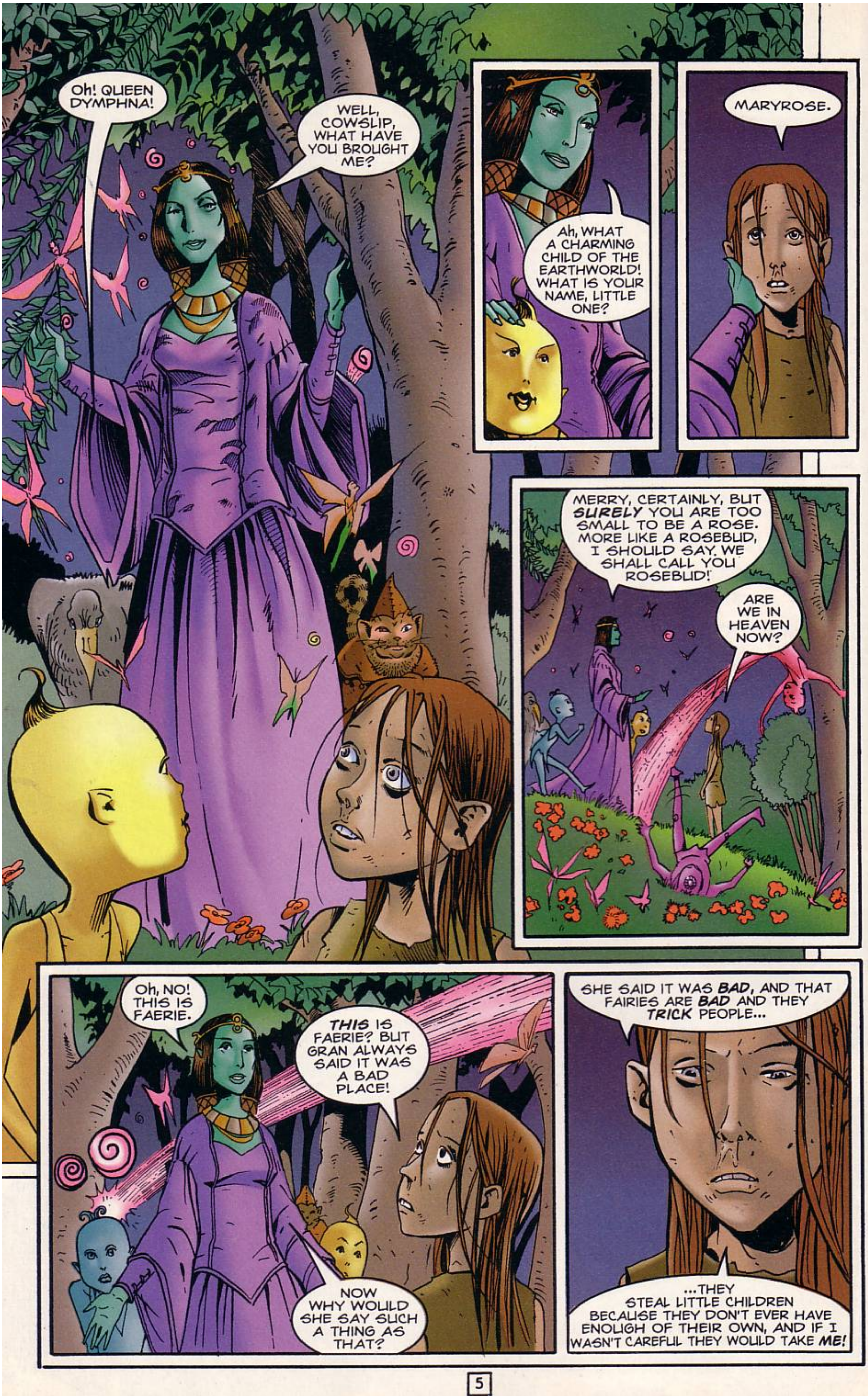
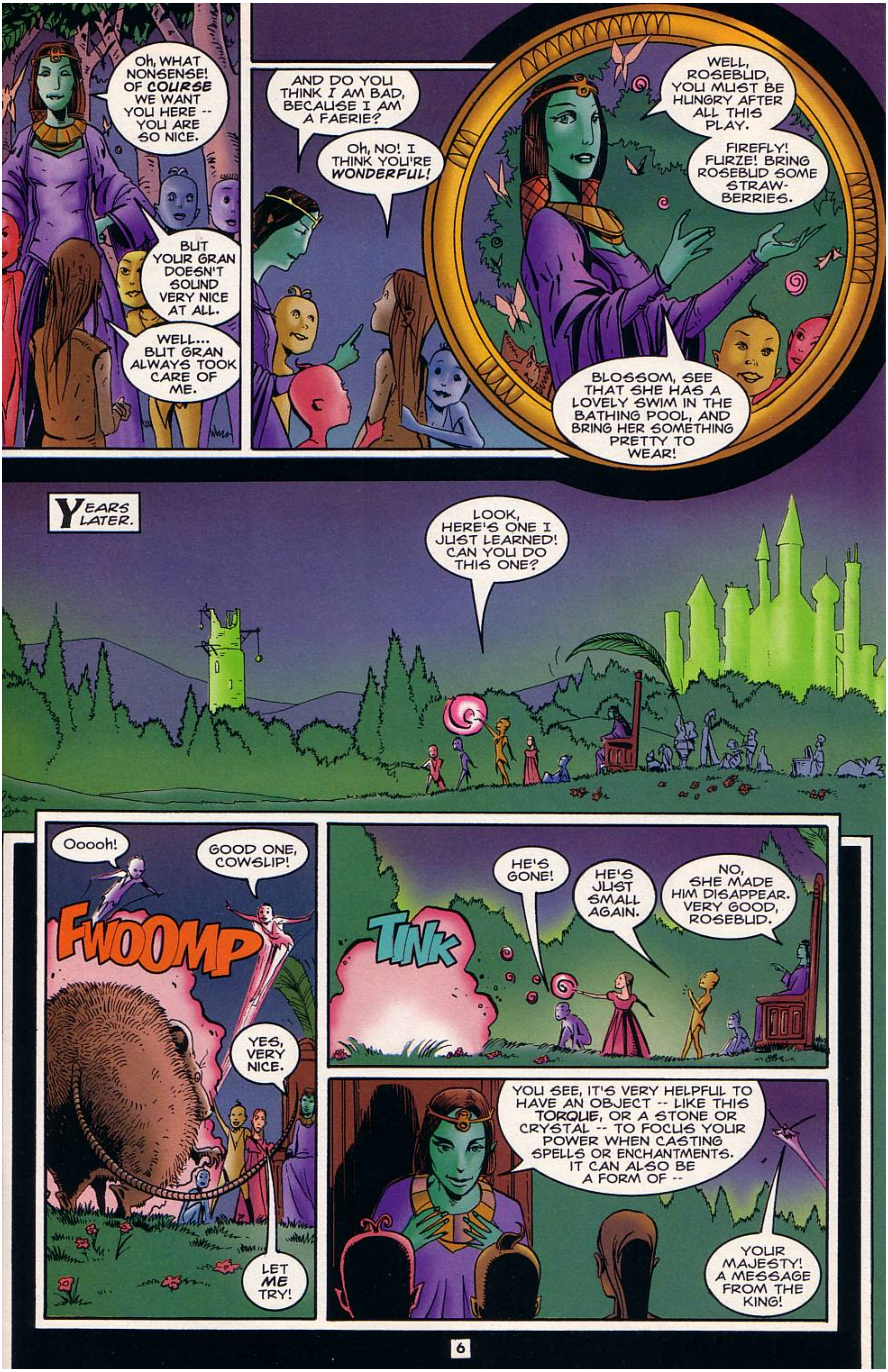
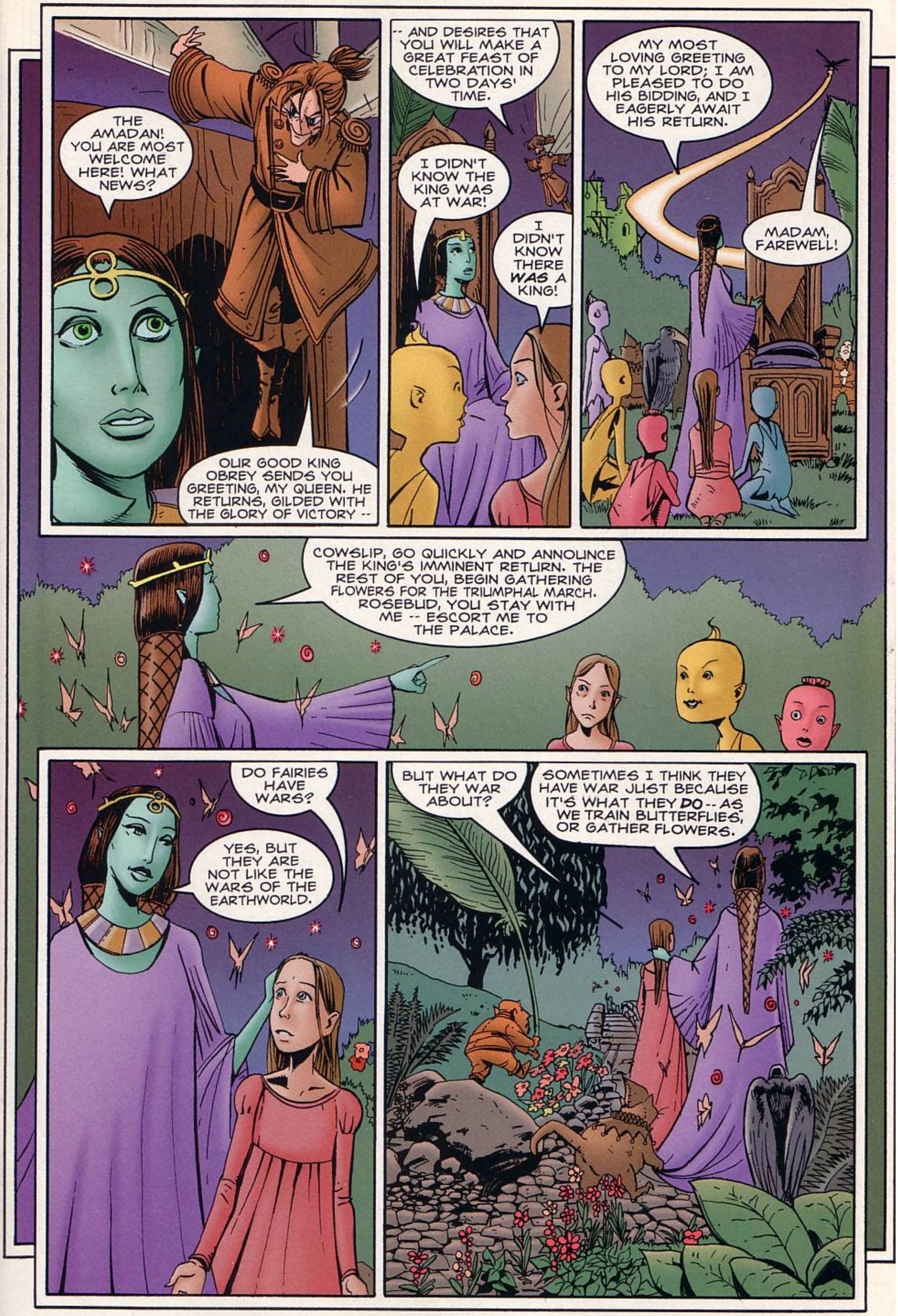
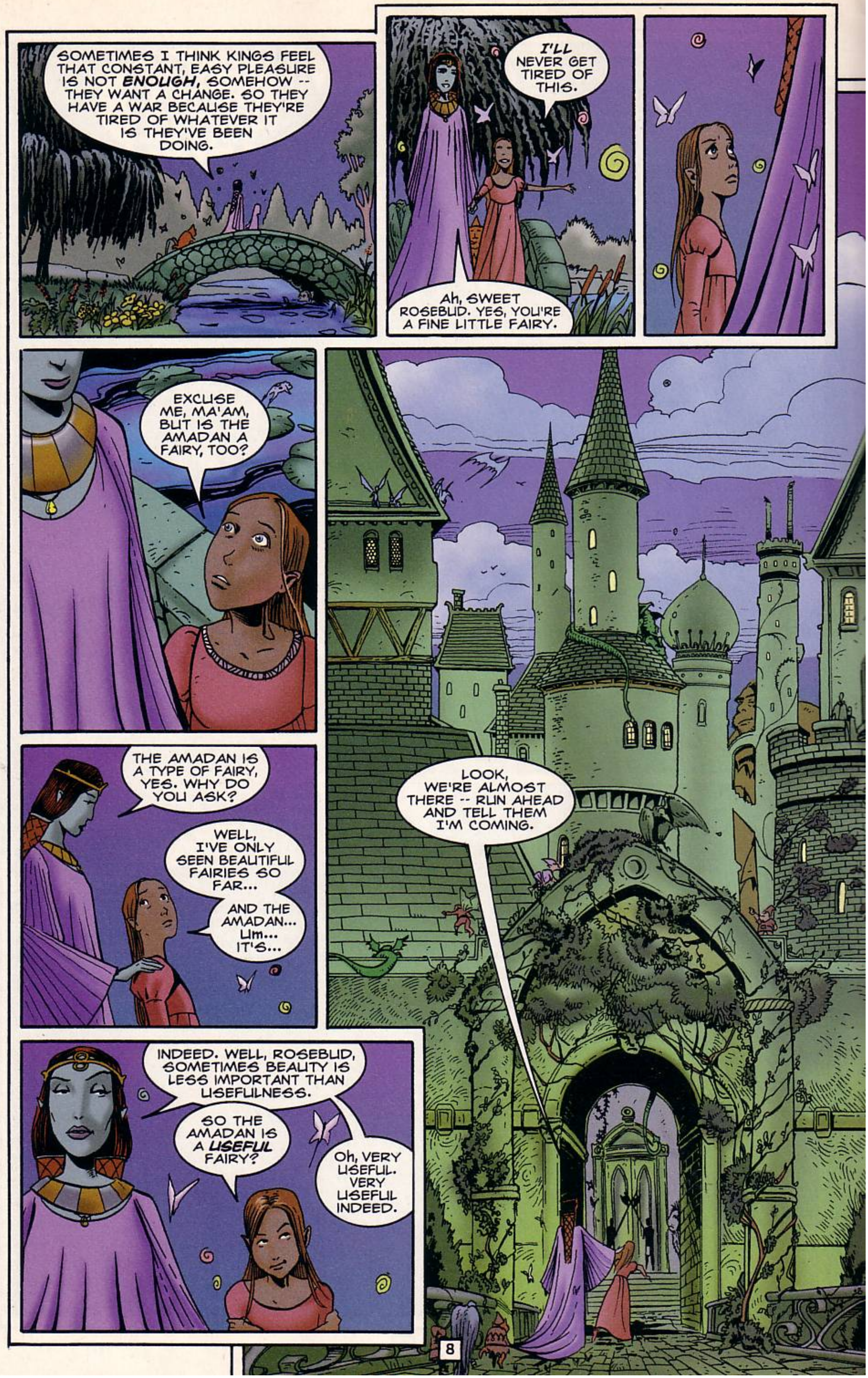
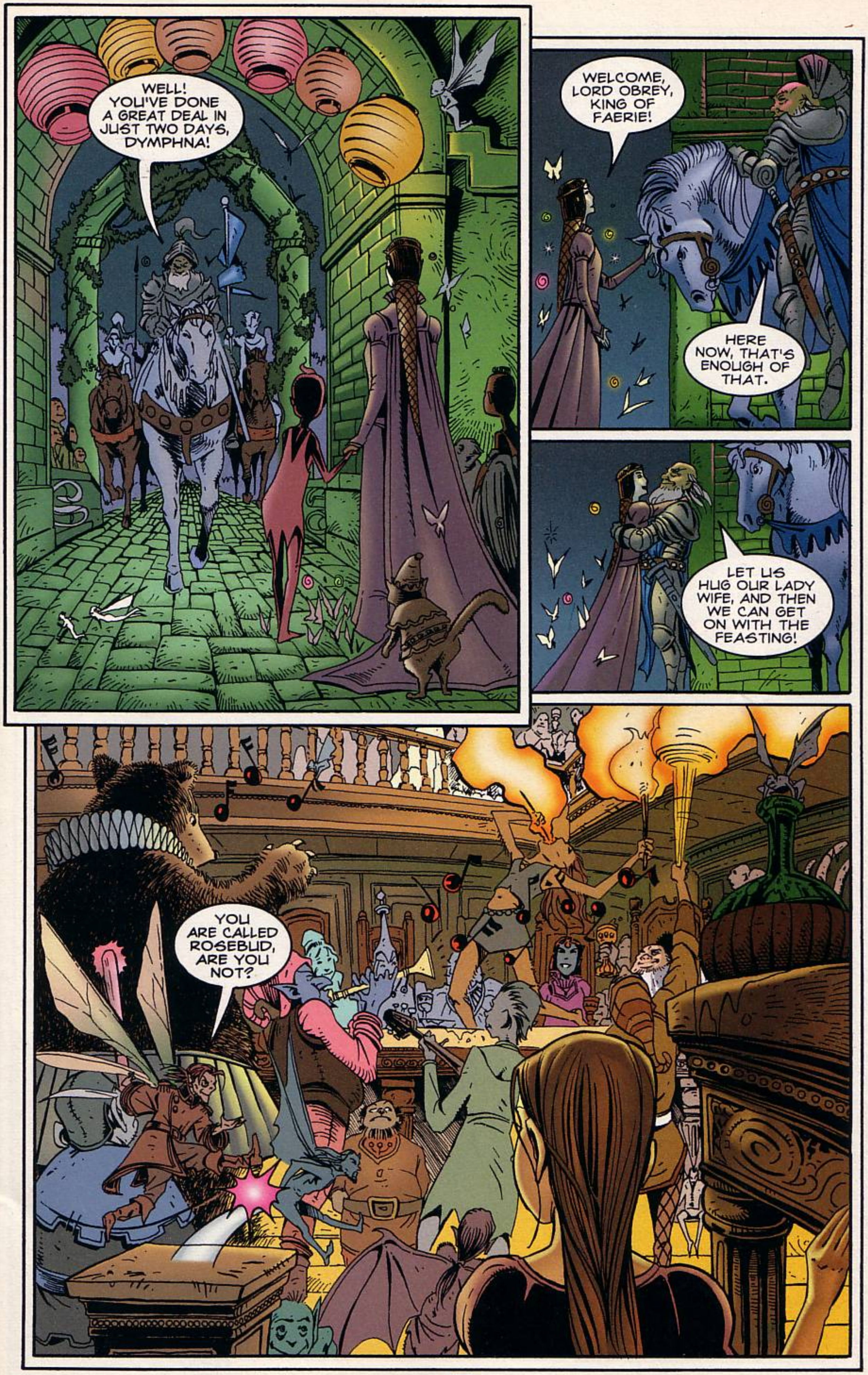

WHEEE
POP
WASN'T THAT FUN?!
POP
POP
POP
ARE YOU HUNGRY? WE HAVE HONEYDEW WITH MILK -- IT'S VERY GOOD!
Ummm, YES!
AND BERRIES, TOO -- SO GOOD TO EAT!
DO HAVE SOME WITH US!

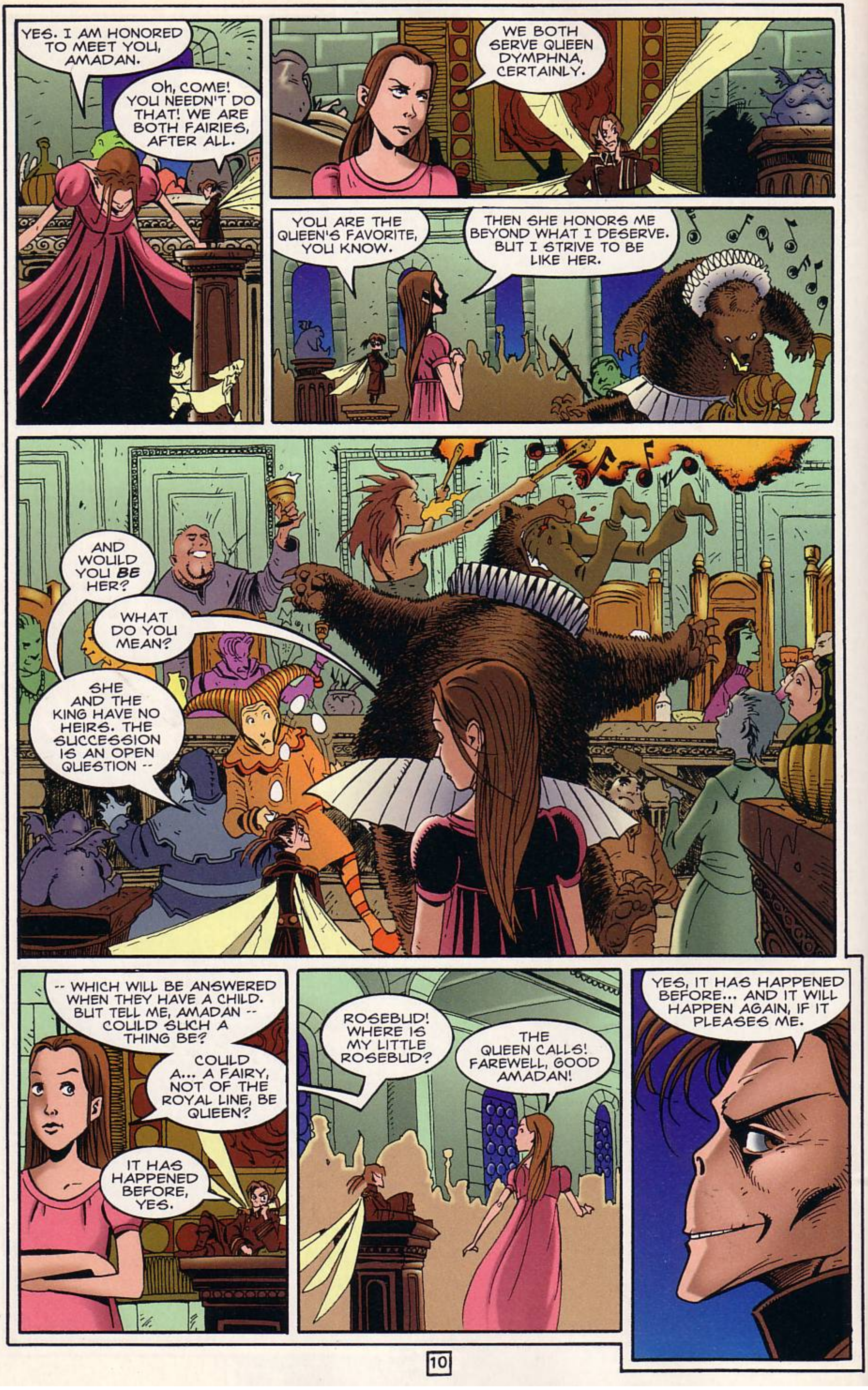

Oh! QUEEN DYMPHNA!
WELL, COWSLIP, WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME?
Ah, WHAT A CHARMING CHILD OF THE EARTHWORLD! WHAT IS YOUR NAME, LITTLE ONE?
MARYROSE.
MERRY, CERTAINLY, BUT SURELY YOU ARE TOO SMALL TO BE A ROSE. MORE LIKE A ROSEBUD, I SHOULD SAY. WE SHALL CALL YOU ROSEBUD!
ARE WE IN HEAVEN NOW?
Oh, NO! THIS IS FAERIE.
THIS IS FAERIE? BUT GRAN ALWAYS SAID IT WAS A BAD PLACE!
NOW WHY WOULD SHE SAY SUCH A THING AS THAT?
SHE SAID IT WAS BAD, AND THAT FAIRIES ARE BAD AND THEY TRICK PEOPLE...
...THEY STEAL LITTLE CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY DON'T EVER HAVE ENOUGH OF THEIR OWN, AND IF I WASN'T CAREFUL THEY WOULD TAKE ME!

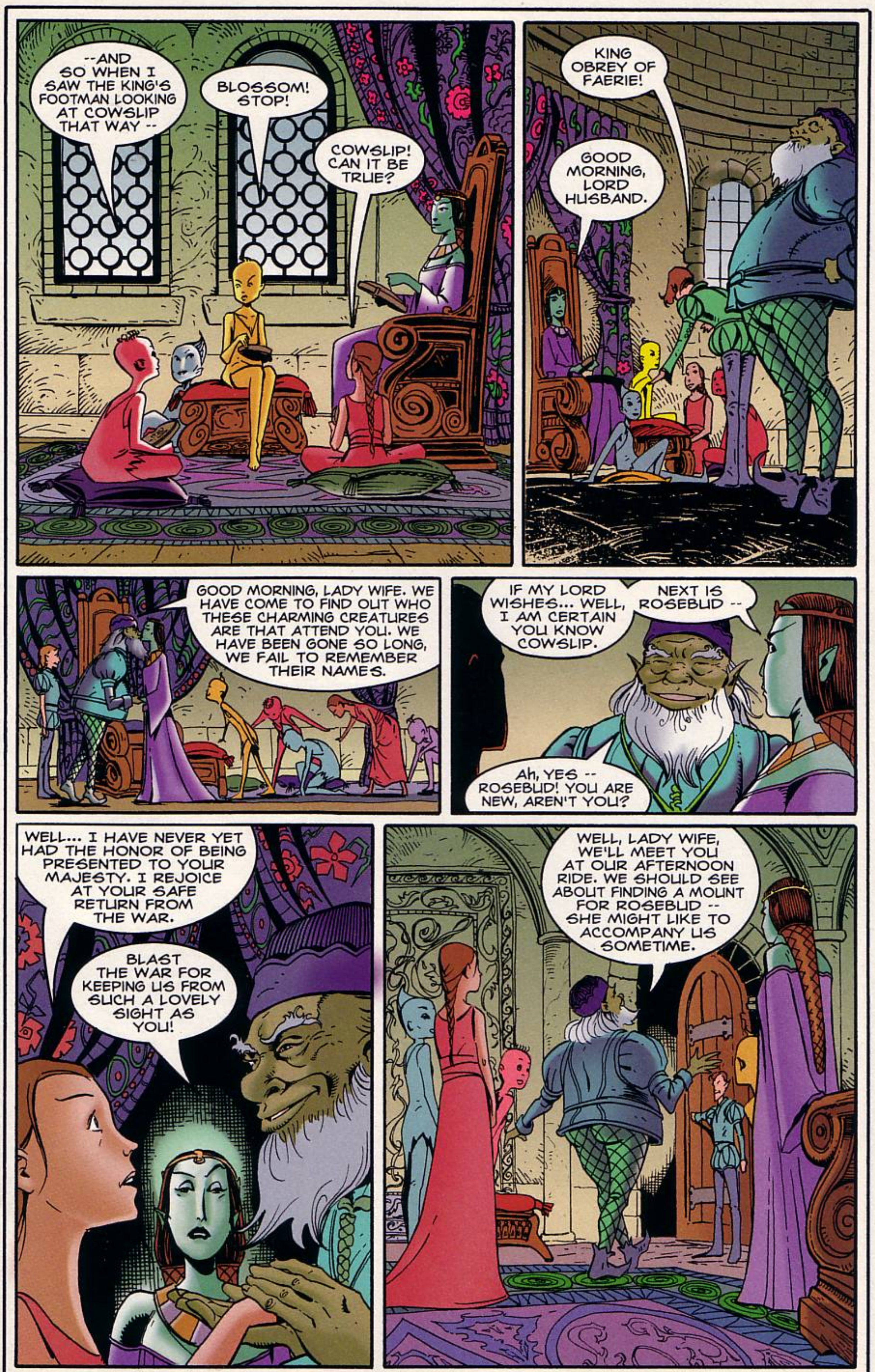

Oh, WHAT NONSENSE! OF *COURSE* WE WANT YOU HERE -- YOU ARE SO NICE.
BUT YOUR GRAN DOESN'T SOUND VERY NICE AT ALL.
WELL... BUT GRAN ALWAYS TOOK CARE OF ME.
AND DO YOU THINK *I AM* BAD, BECAUSE I AM A FAERIE?
Oh, NO! I THINK YOU'RE ***WONDERFUL!***
WELL, ROSEBUD, YOU MUST BE HUNGRY AFTER ALL THIS PLAY.
FIREFLY! FURZE! BRING ROSEBUD SOME STRAWBERRIES.
BLOSSOM, SEE THAT SHE HAS A LOVELY SWIM IN THE BATHING POOL, AND BRING HER SOMETHING PRETTY TO WEAR!
YEARS LATER.
LOOK, HERE'S ONE I JUST LEARNED! CAN YOU DO THIS ONE?
Ooooh!
GOOD ONE, COWSLIP!
FWOOMP
YES, VERY NICE.
LET *ME* TRY!
TINK
HE'S GONE!
HE'S JUST SMALL AGAIN.
NO, SHE MADE HIM DISAPPEAR. VERY GOOD, ROSEBUD.
YOU SEE, IT'S VERY HELPFUL TO HAVE AN OBJECT -- LIKE THIS **TORQUE**, OR A STONE OR CRYSTAL -- TO FOCUS YOUR POWER WHEN CASTING SPELLS OR ENCHANTMENTS. IT CAN ALSO BE A FORM OF --
YOUR MAJESTY! A MESSAGE FROM THE KING!

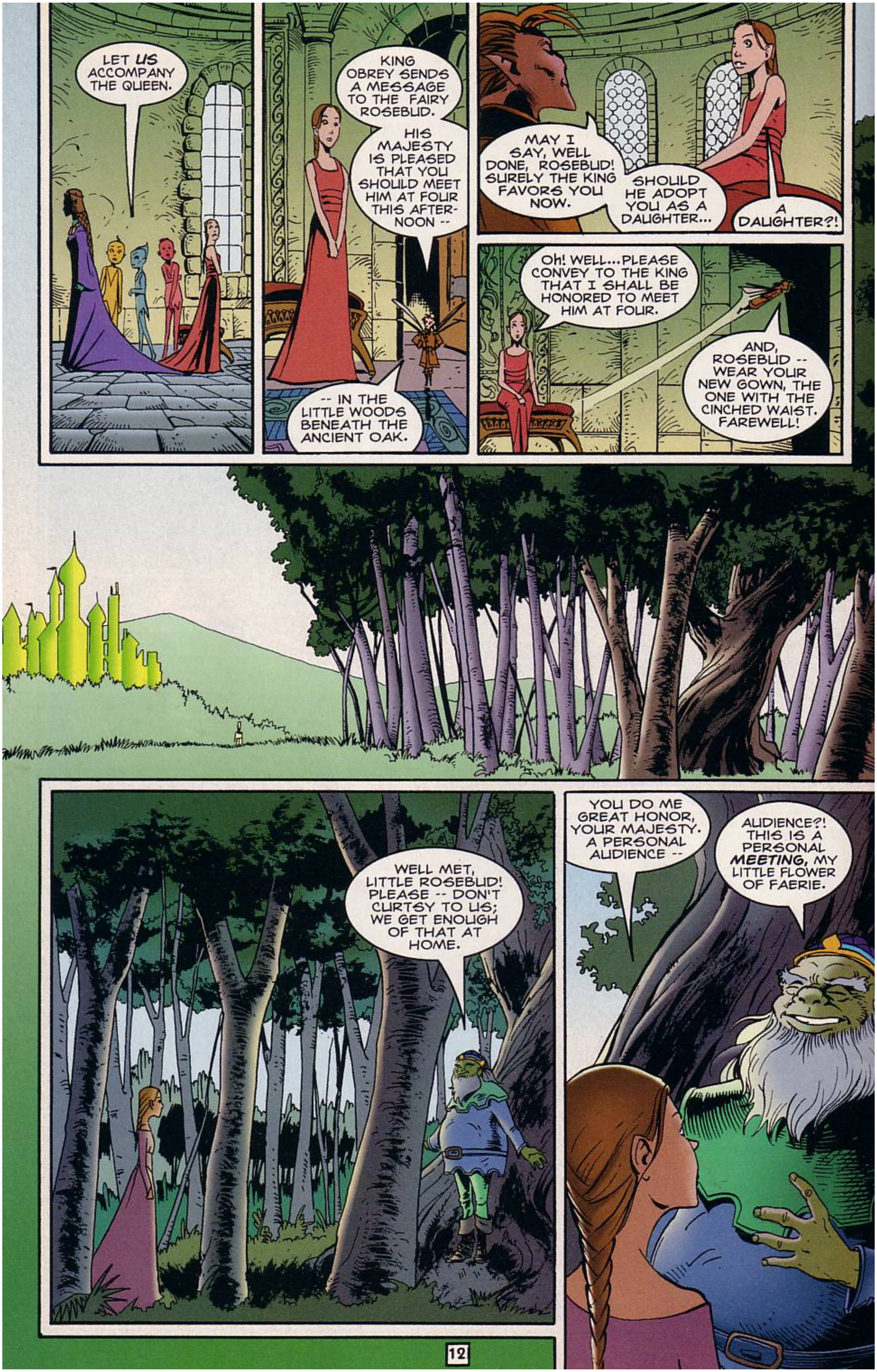

THE AMADAN! YOU ARE MOST WELCOME HERE! WHAT NEWS?
OUR GOOD KING OBREY SENDS YOU GREETING, MY QUEEN. HE RETURNS, GILDED WITH THE GLORY OF VICTORY --
-- AND DESIRES THAT YOU WILL MAKE A GREAT FEAST OF CELEBRATION IN TWO DAYS' TIME.
I DIDN'T KNOW THE KING WAS AT WAR!
I DIDN'T KNOW THERE *WAS* A KING!
MY MOST LOVING GREETING TO MY LORD; I AM PLEASED TO DO HIS BIDDING, AND I EAGERLY AWAIT HIS RETURN.
MADAM, FAREWELL!
COWSLIP, GO QUICKLY AND ANNOUNCE THE KING'S IMMINENT RETURN. THE REST OF YOU, BEGIN GATHERING FLOWERS FOR THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH. ROSEBUD, YOU STAY WITH ME -- ESCORT ME TO THE PALACE.
DO FAIRIES HAVE WARS?
YES, BUT THEY ARE NOT LIKE THE WARS OF THE EARTHWORLD.
BUT WHAT DO THEY WAR ABOUT?
SOMETIMES I THINK THEY HAVE WAR JUST BECAUSE IT'S WHAT THEY *DO* -- AS WE TRAIN BUTTERFLIES, OR GATHER FLOWERS.

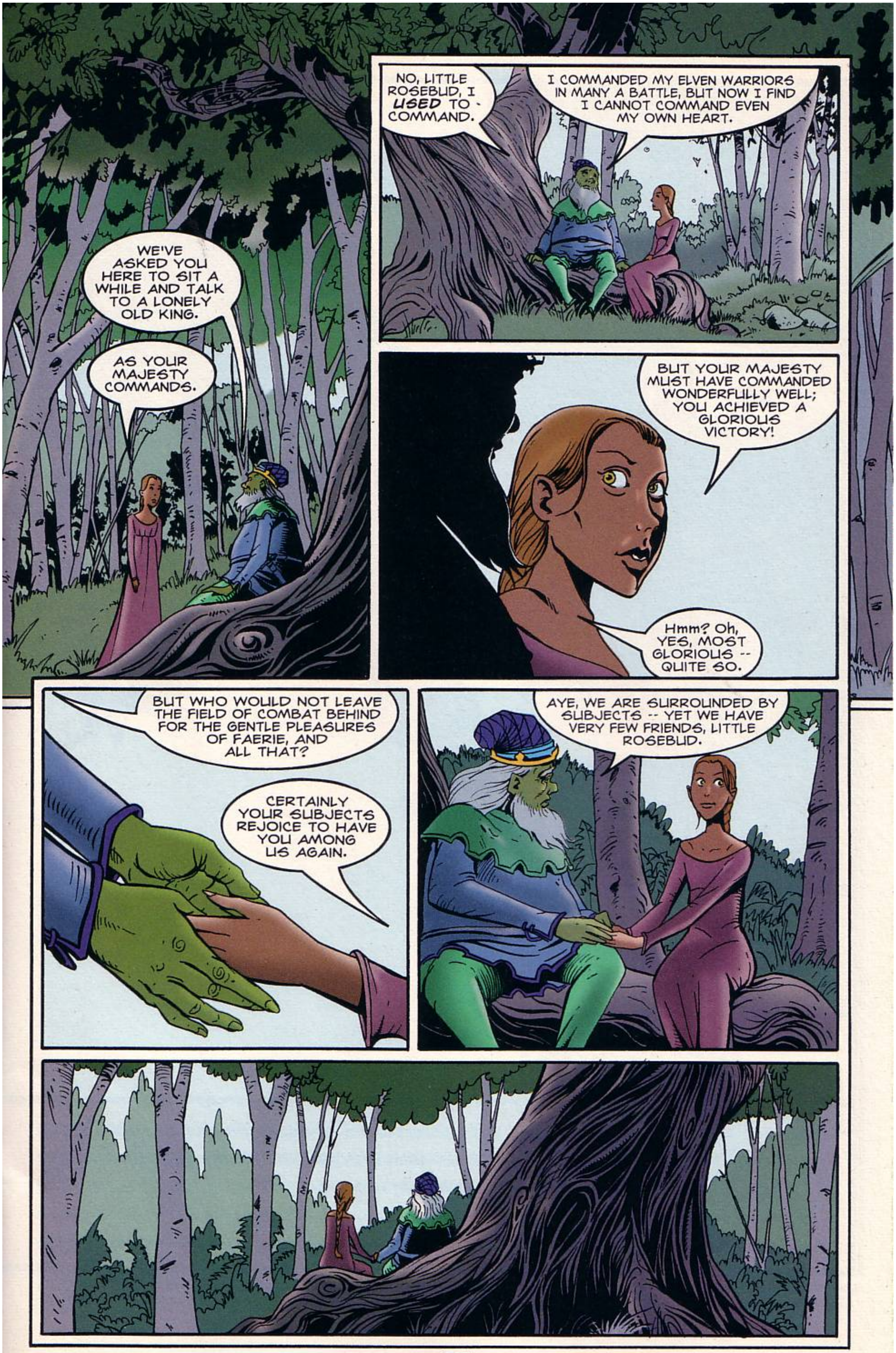

SOMETIMES I THINK KINGS FEEL THAT CONSTANT, EASY PLEASURE IS NOT *ENOUGH*, SOMEHOW -- THEY WANT A CHANGE. SO THEY HAVE A WAR BECAUSE THEY'RE TIRED OF WHATEVER IT IS THEY'VE BEEN DOING.
I'LL NEVER GET TIRED OF THIS.
Ah, SWEET ROSEBUD. YES, YOU'RE A FINE LITTLE FAIRY.
EXCUSE ME, MA'AM, BUT IS THE AMADAN A FAIRY, TOO?
THE AMADAN IS A TYPE OF FAIRY, YES. WHY DO YOU ASK?
WELL, I'VE ONLY SEEN BEAUTIFUL FAIRIES SO FAR...
AND THE AMADAN... Um... IT'S...
INDEED. WELL, ROSEBUD, SOMETIMES BEAUTY IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN USEFULNESS.
SO THE AMADAN IS A *USEFUL* FAIRY?
Oh, VERY USEFUL. VERY USEFUL INDEED.
LOOK, WE'RE ALMOST THERE -- RUN AHEAD AND TELL THEM I'M COMING.

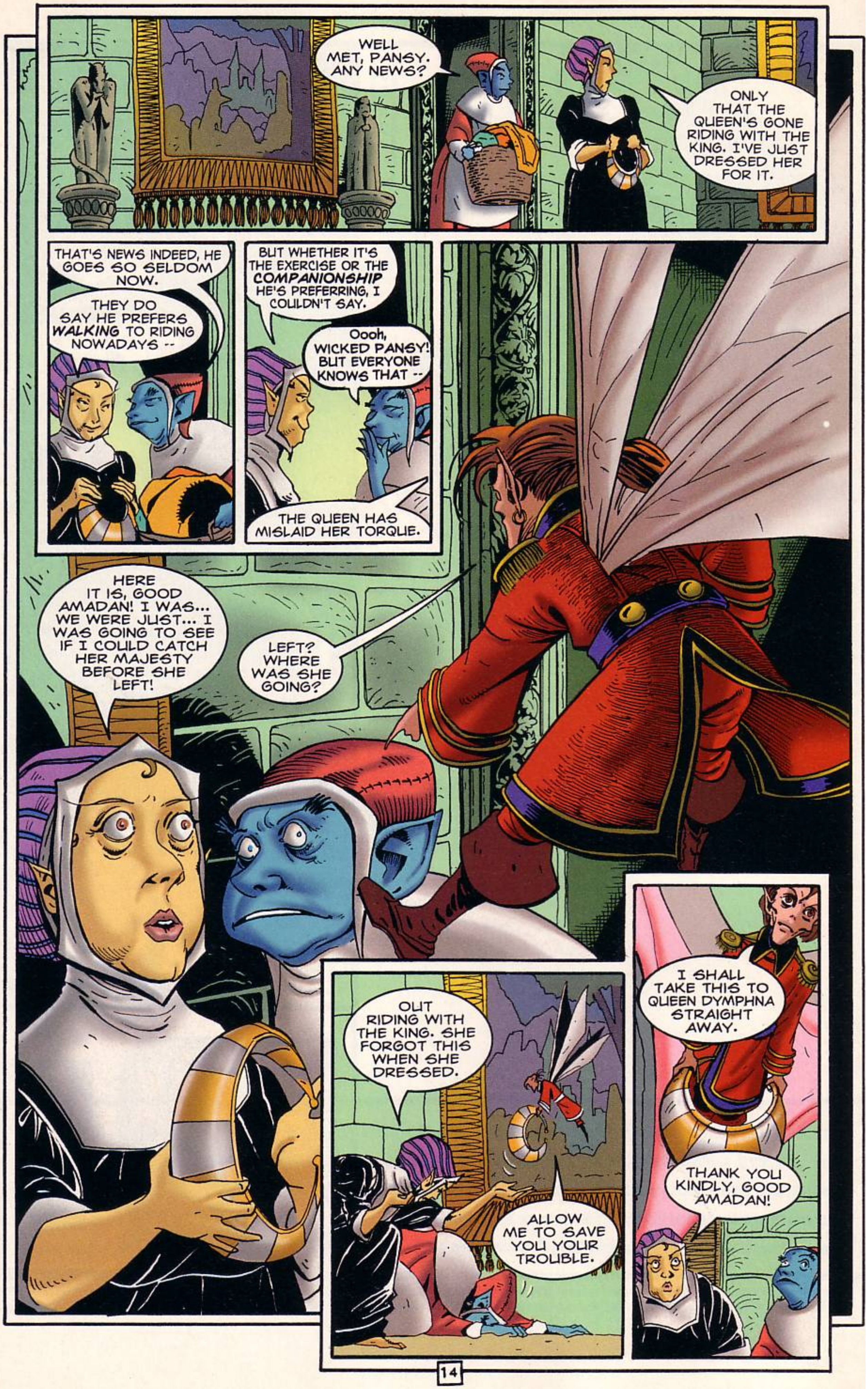

WELL! YOU'VE DONE A GREAT DEAL IN JUST TWO DAYS, DYMPHNA!
WELCOME, LORD OBREY, KING OF FAERIE!
HERE NOW, THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT.
LET US HUG OUR LADY WIFE, AND THEN WE CAN GET ON WITH THE FEASTING!
YOU ARE CALLED ROSEBUD, ARE YOU NOT?

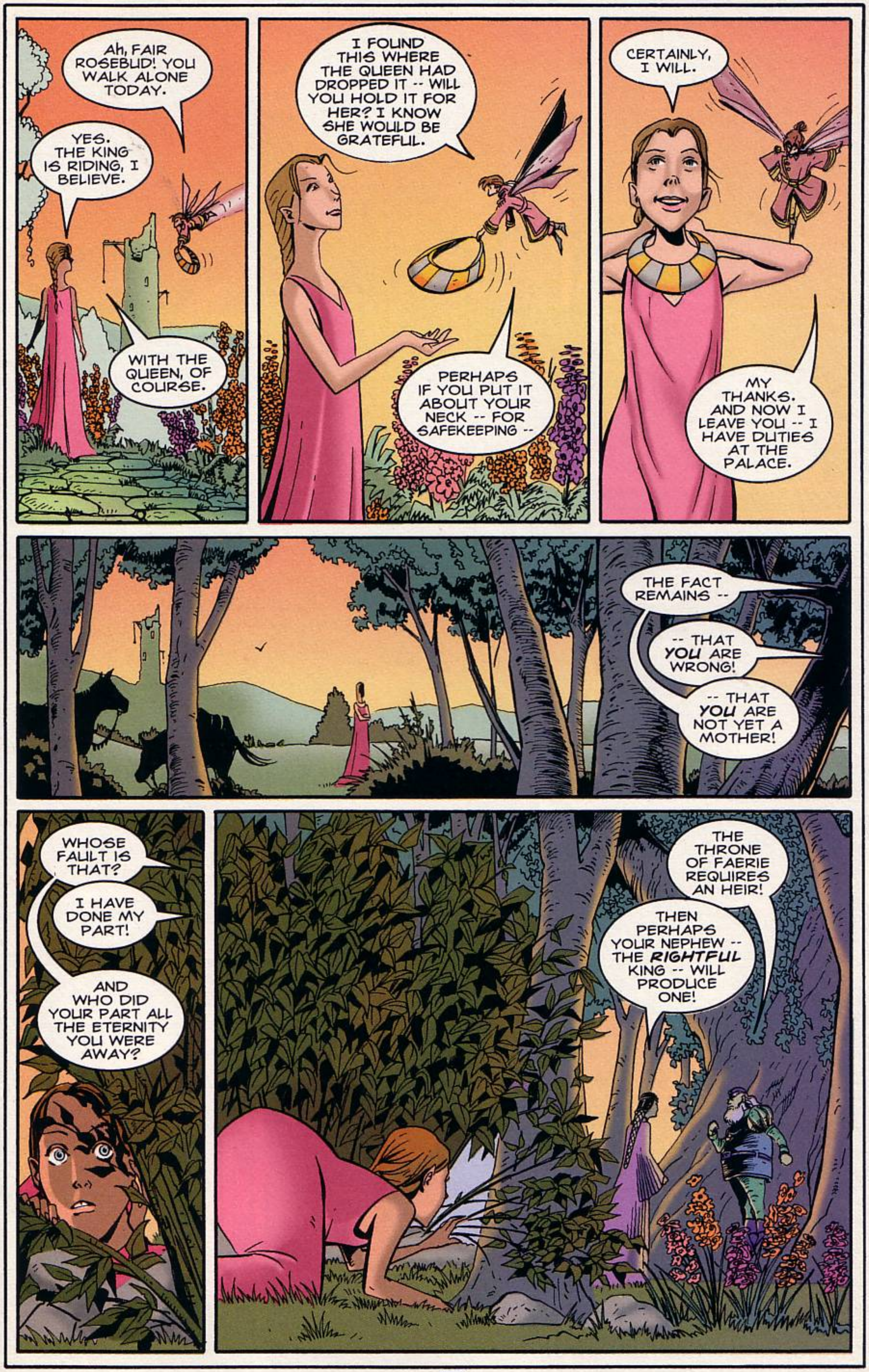

YES. I AM HONORED TO MEET YOU, AMADAN.
Oh, COME! YOU NEEDN'T DO THAT! WE ARE BOTH FAIRIES, AFTER ALL.
WE BOTH SERVE QUEEN DYMPHNA, CERTAINLY.
YOU ARE THE QUEEN'S FAVORITE, YOU KNOW.
THEN SHE HONORS ME BEYOND WHAT I DESERVE. BUT I STRIVE TO BE LIKE HER.
AND WOULD YOU *BE* HER?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SHE AND THE KING HAVE NO HEIRS. THE SUCCESSION IS AN OPEN QUESTION --
-- WHICH WILL BE ANSWERED WHEN THEY HAVE A CHILD. BUT TELL ME, AMADAN -- COULD SUCH A THING BE?
COULD A... A FAIRY, NOT OF THE ROYAL LINE, BE QUEEN?
IT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE, YES.
ROSEBUD! WHERE IS MY LITTLE ROSEBUD?
THE QUEEN CALLS! FAREWELL, GOOD AMADAN!
YES, IT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE... AND IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN, IF IT PLEASES ME.

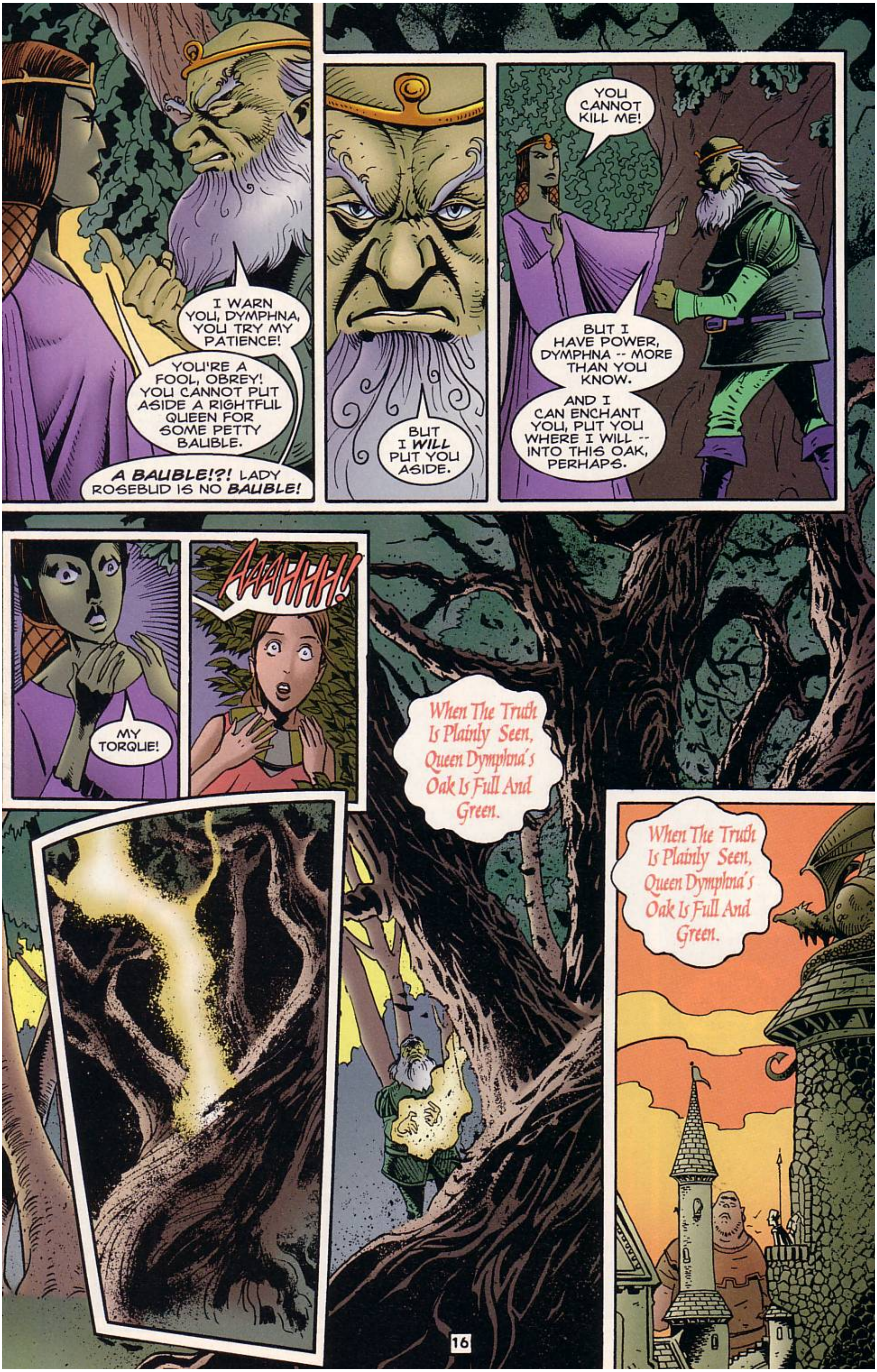

--AND SO WHEN I SAW THE KING'S FOOTMAN LOOKING AT COWSLIP THAT WAY --
BLOSSOM! STOP!
COWSLIP! CAN IT BE TRUE?
KING OBREY OF FAERIE!
GOOD MORNING, LORD HUSBAND.
GOOD MORNING, LADY WIFE. WE HAVE COME TO FIND OUT WHO THESE CHARMING CREATURES ARE THAT ATTEND YOU. WE HAVE BEEN GONE SO LONG, WE FAIL TO REMEMBER THEIR NAMES.
IF MY LORD WISHES... WELL, I AM CERTAIN YOU KNOW COWSLIP.
NEXT IS ROSEBUD --
Ah, YES -- ROSEBUD! YOU ARE NEW, AREN'T YOU?
WELL... I HAVE NEVER YET HAD THE HONOR OF BEING PRESENTED TO YOUR MAJESTY. I REJOICE AT YOUR SAFE RETURN FROM THE WAR.
BLAST THE WAR FOR KEEPING US FROM SUCH A LOVELY SIGHT AS YOU!
WELL, LADY WIFE, WE'LL MEET YOU AT OUR AFTERNOON RIDE. WE SHOULD SEE ABOUT FINDING A MOUNT FOR ROSEBUD -- SHE MIGHT LIKE TO ACCOMPANY US SOMETIME.

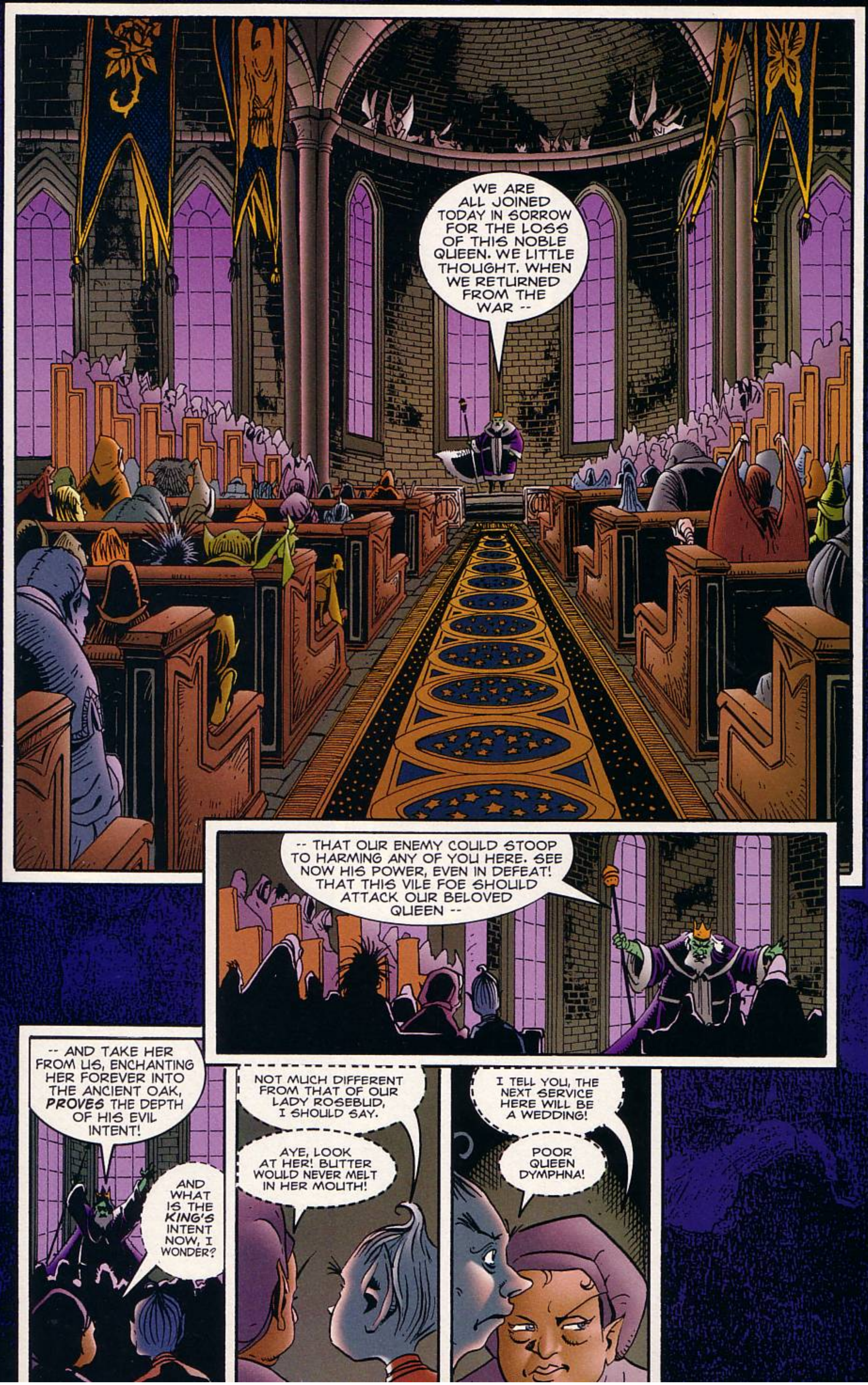

LET *US* ACCOMPANY THE QUEEN.
KING OBREY SENDS A MESSAGE TO THE FAIRY ROSEBUD.
HIS MAJESTY IS PLEASED THAT YOU SHOULD MEET HIM AT FOUR THIS AFTERNOON --
-- IN THE LITTLE WOODS BENEATH THE ANCIENT OAK.
MAY I SAY, WELL DONE, ROSEBUD! SURELY THE KING FAVORS YOU NOW.
SHOULD HE ADOPT YOU AS A DAUGHTER...
A DAUGHTER?!
Oh! WELL...PLEASE CONVEY TO THE KING THAT I SHALL BE HONORED TO MEET HIM AT FOUR.
AND, ROSEBUD -- WEAR YOUR NEW GOWN, THE ONE WITH THE CINCHED WAIST. FAREWELL!
WELL MET, LITTLE ROSEBUD! PLEASE -- DON'T CURTSY TO US; WE GET ENOUGH OF THAT AT HOME.
YOU DO ME GREAT HONOR, YOUR MAJESTY. A PERSONAL AUDIENCE --
AUDIENCE?! THIS IS A PERSONAL *MEETING,* MY LITTLE FLOWER OF FAERIE.

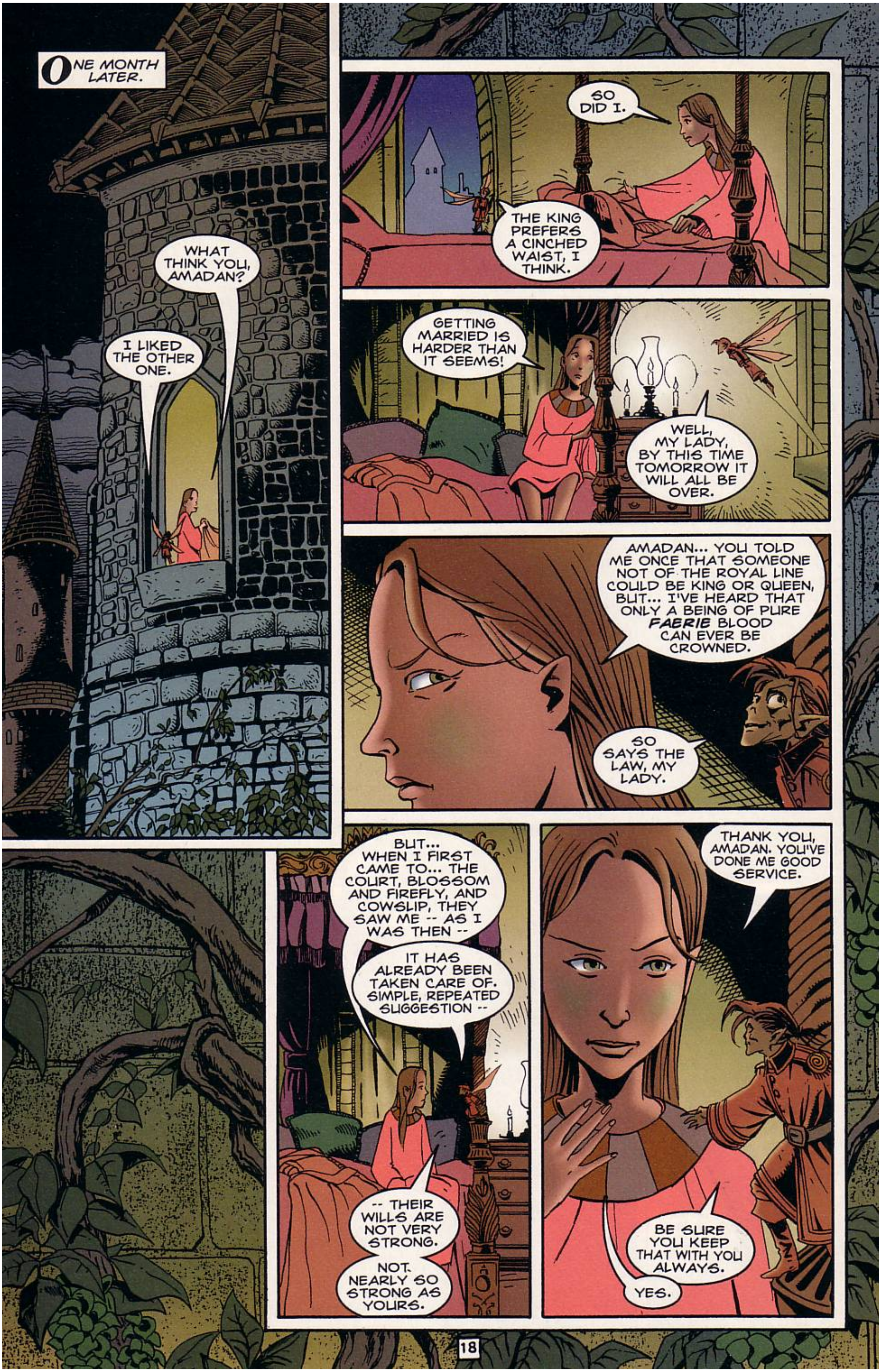

WE'VE ASKED YOU HERE TO SIT A WHILE AND TALK TO A LONELY OLD KING.
AS YOUR MAJESTY COMMANDS.
NO, LITTLE ROSEBUD, I *USED* TO COMMAND.
I COMMANDED MY ELVEN WARRIORS IN MANY A BATTLE, BUT NOW I FIND I CANNOT COMMAND EVEN MY OWN HEART.
BUT YOUR MAJESTY MUST HAVE COMMANDED WONDERFULLY WELL; YOU ACHIEVED A GLORIOUS VICTORY!
Hmm? Oh, YES, MOST GLORIOUS -- QUITE SO.
BUT WHO WOULD NOT LEAVE THE FIELD OF COMBAT BEHIND FOR THE GENTLE PLEASURES OF FAERIE, AND ALL THAT?
CERTAINLY YOUR SUBJECTS REJOICE TO HAVE YOU AMONG US AGAIN.
AYE, WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SUBJECTS -- YET WE HAVE VERY FEW FRIENDS, LITTLE ROSEBUD.

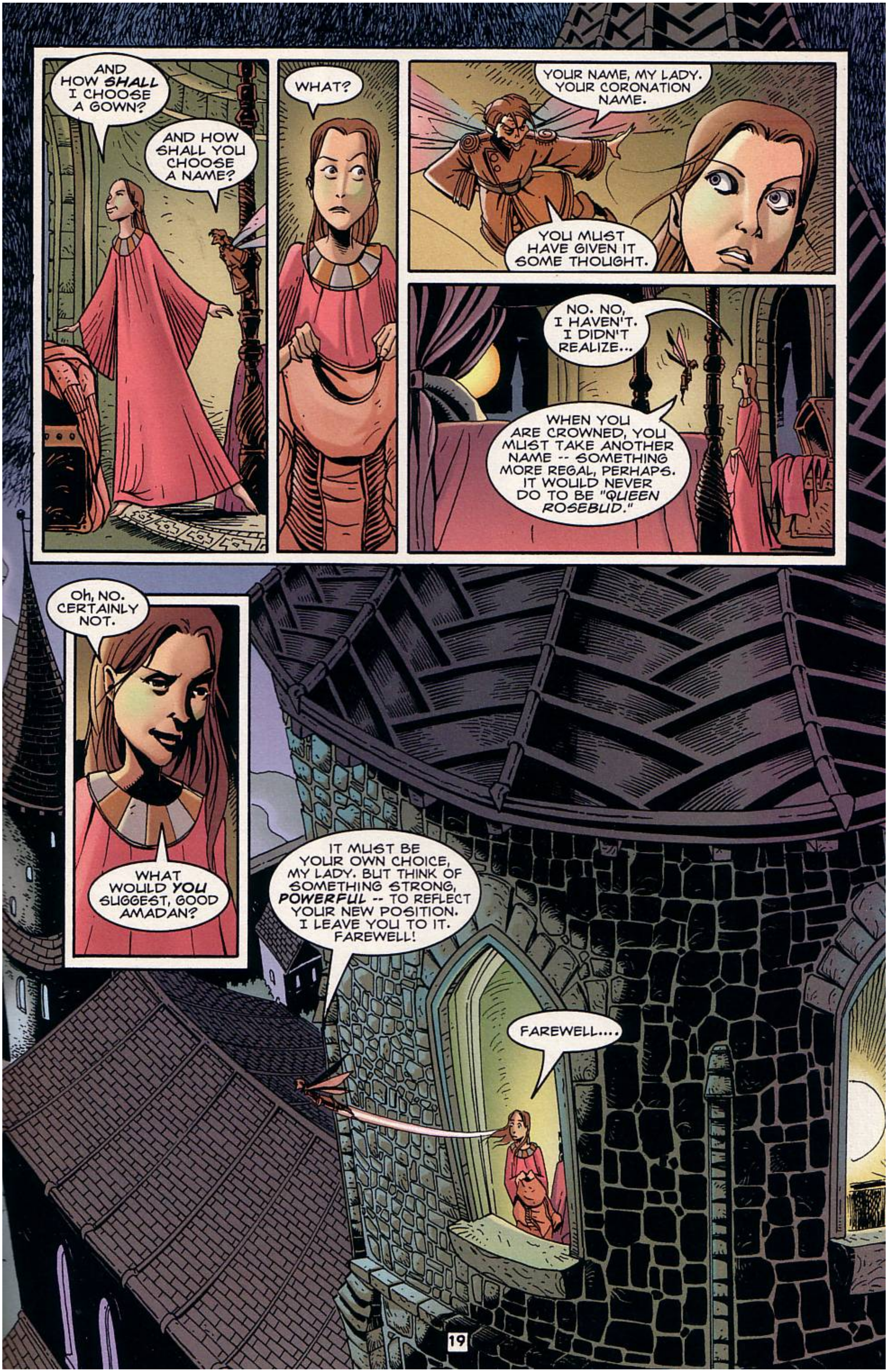

WELL MET, PANSY. ANY NEWS?
ONLY THAT THE QUEEN'S GONE RIDING WITH THE KING. I'VE JUST DRESSED HER FOR IT.
THAT'S NEWS INDEED, HE GOES SO SELDOM NOW.
THEY DO SAY HE PREFERS *WALKING* TO RIDING NOWADAYS --
BUT WHETHER IT'S THE EXERCISE OR THE *COMPANIONSHIP* HE'S PREFERRING, I COULDN'T SAY.
Oooh, WICKED PANSY! BUT EVERYONE KNOWS THAT --
THE QUEEN HAS MISLAID HER TORQUE.
HERE IT IS, GOOD AMADAN! I WAS... WE WERE JUST... I WAS GOING TO SEE IF I COULD CATCH HER MAJESTY BEFORE SHE LEFT!
LEFT? WHERE WAS SHE GOING?
OUT RIDING WITH THE KING. SHE FORGOT THIS WHEN SHE DRESSED.
ALLOW ME TO SAVE YOU YOUR TROUBLE.
I SHALL TAKE THIS TO QUEEN DYMPHNA STRAIGHT AWAY.
THANK YOU KINDLY, GOOD AMADAN!

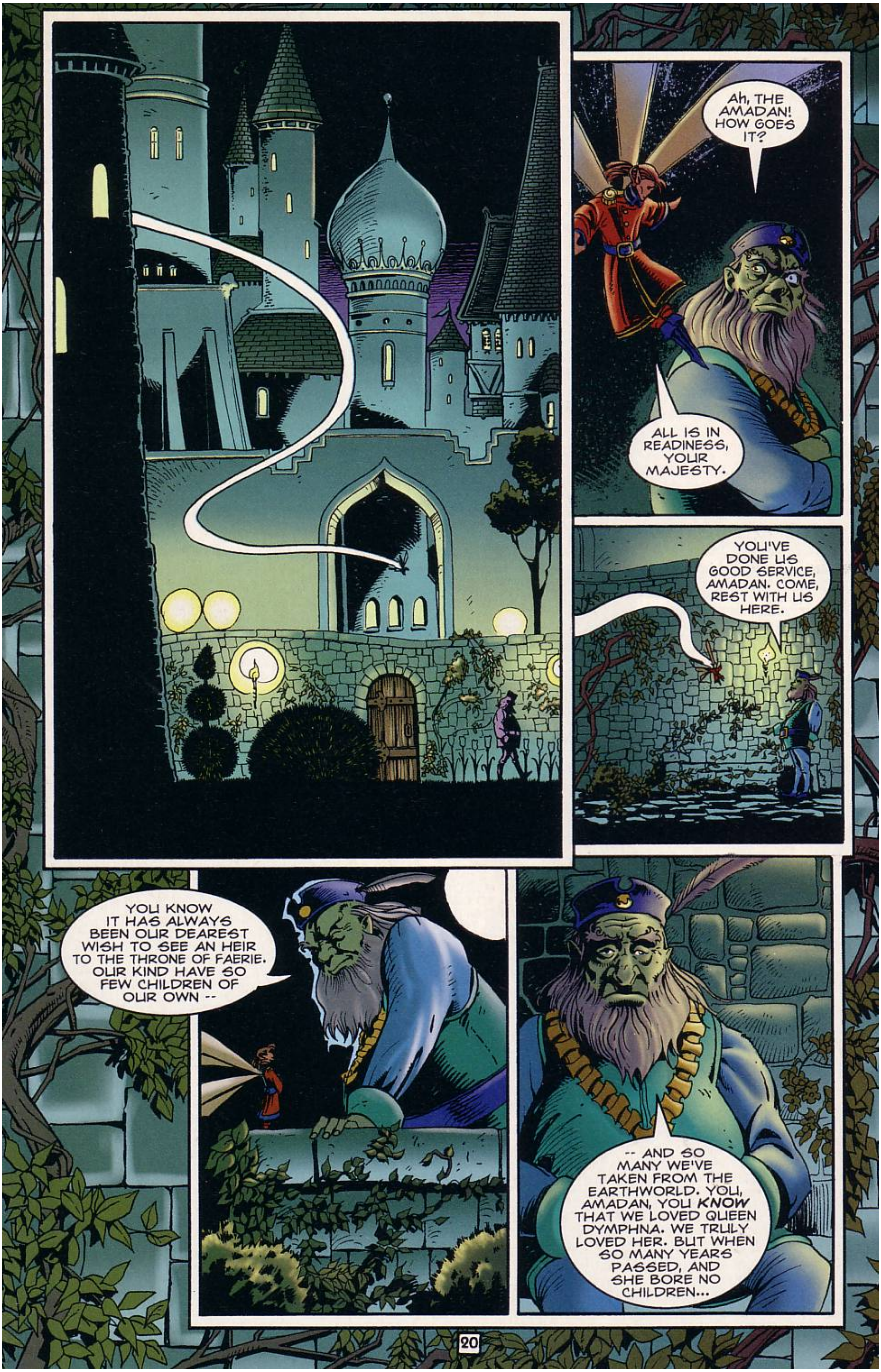

Ah, FAIR ROSEBUD! YOU WALK ALONE TODAY.
YES. THE KING IS RIDING, I BELIEVE.
WITH THE QUEEN, OF COURSE.
I FOUND THIS WHERE THE QUEEN HAD DROPPED IT -- WILL YOU HOLD IT FOR HER? I KNOW SHE WOULD BE GRATEFUL.
PERHAPS IF YOU PUT IT ABOUT YOUR NECK -- FOR SAFEKEEPING --
CERTAINLY, I WILL.
MY THANKS. AND NOW I LEAVE YOU -- I HAVE DUTIES AT THE PALACE.
THE FACT REMAINS --
-- THAT YOU ARE WRONG!
-- THAT YOU ARE NOT YET A MOTHER!
WHOSE FAULT IS THAT?
I HAVE DONE MY PART!
AND WHO DID YOUR PART ALL THE ETERNITY YOU WERE AWAY?
THE THRONE OF FAERIE REQUIRES AN HEIR!
THEN PERHAPS YOUR NEPHEW -- THE RIGHTFUL KING -- WILL PRODUCE ONE!

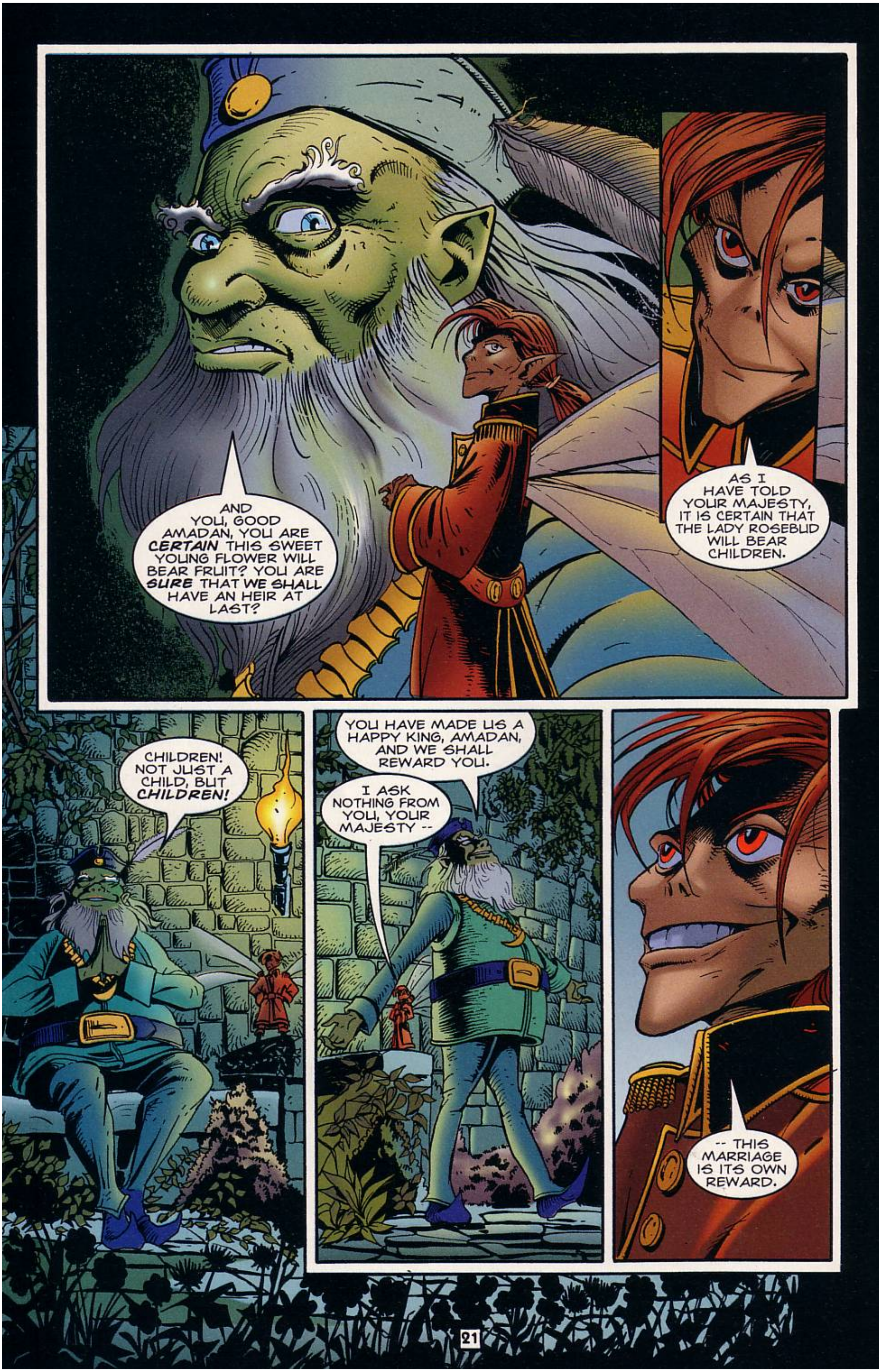

I WARN YOU, DYMPHNA, YOU TRY MY PATIENCE!
YOU'RE A FOOL, OBREY! YOU CANNOT PUT ASIDE A RIGHTFUL QUEEN FOR SOME PETTY BAUBLE.
A BAUBLE!?! LADY ROSEBUD IS NO BAUBLE!
BUT I WILL PUT YOU ASIDE.
YOU CANNOT KILL ME!
BUT I HAVE POWER, DYMPHNA -- MORE THAN YOU KNOW.
AND I CAN ENCHANT YOU, PUT YOU WHERE I WILL -- INTO THIS OAK, PERHAPS.
MY TORQUE!
AAAHHH!
When The Truth Is Plainly Seen, Queen Dymphna's Oak Is Full And Green.
When The Truth Is Plainly Seen, Queen Dymphna's Oak Is Full And Green.

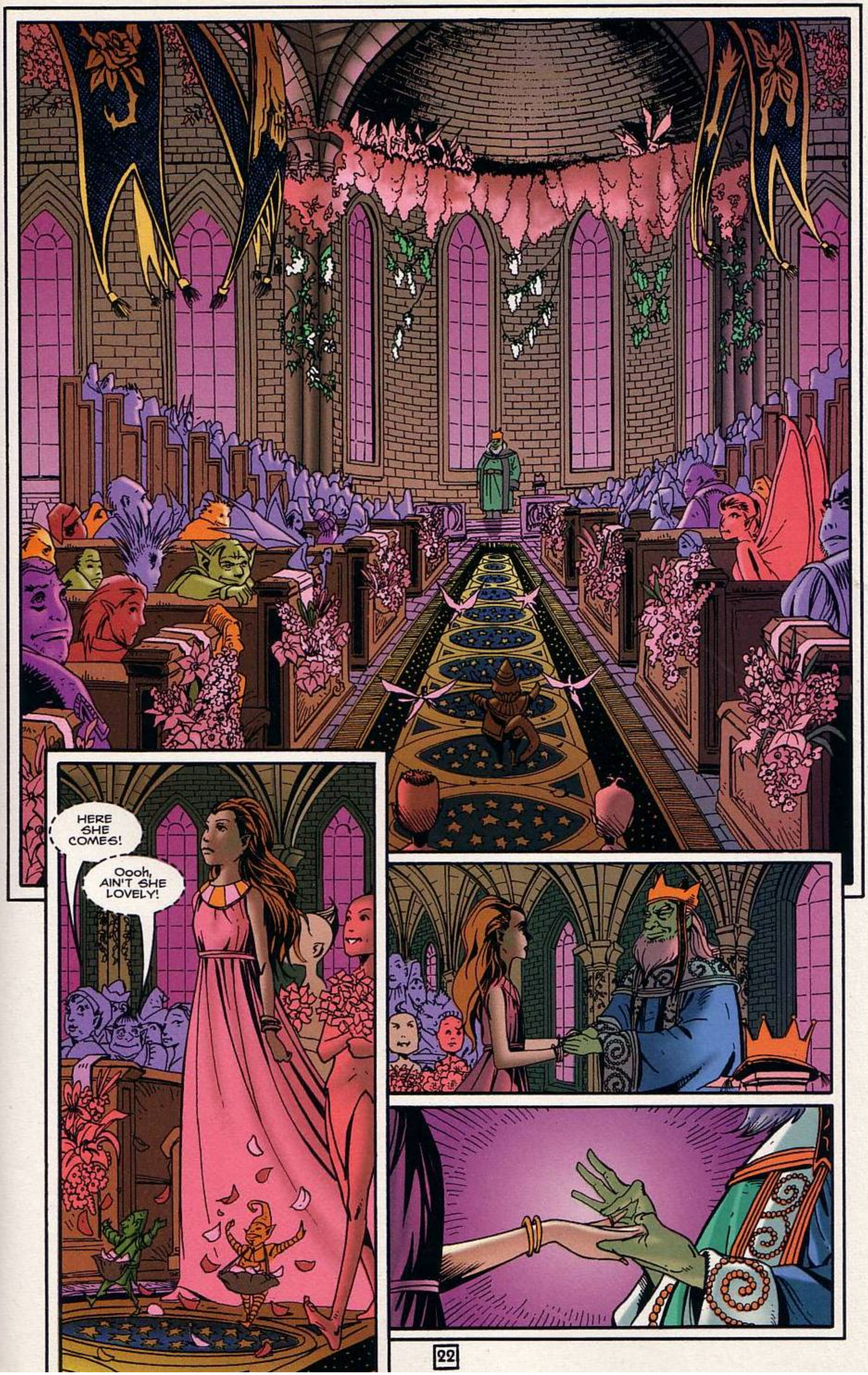

WE ARE ALL JOINED TODAY IN SORROW FOR THE LOSS OF THIS NOBLE QUEEN. WE LITTLE THOUGHT, WHEN WE RETURNED FROM THE WAR --
-- THAT OUR ENEMY COULD STOOP TO HARMING ANY OF YOU HERE. SEE NOW HIS POWER, EVEN IN DEFEAT! THAT THIS VILE FOE SHOULD ATTACK OUR BELOVED QUEEN --
-- AND TAKE HER FROM US, ENCHANTING HER FOREVER INTO THE ANCIENT OAK, *PROVES* THE DEPTH OF HIS EVIL INTENT!
AND WHAT IS THE *KING'S* INTENT NOW, I WONDER?
NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF OUR LADY ROSEBUD, I SHOULD SAY.
AYE, LOOK AT HER! BUTTER WOULD NEVER MELT IN HER MOUTH!
I TELL YOU, THE NEXT SERVICE HERE WILL BE A WEDDING!
POOR QUEEN DYMPHNA!

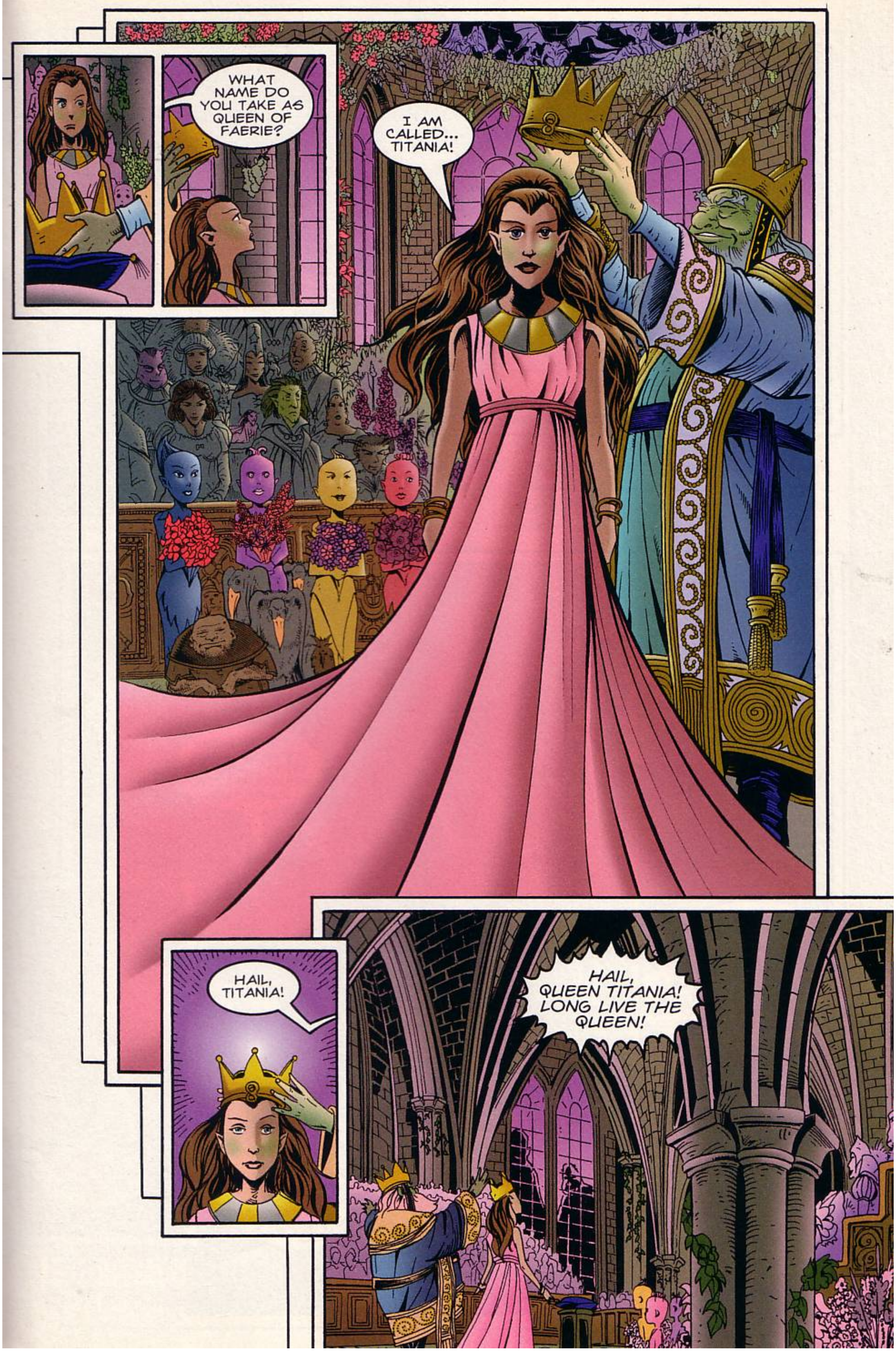

ONE MONTH LATER.
WHAT THINK YOU, AMADAN?
I LIKED THE OTHER ONE.
SO DID I.
THE KING PREFERS A CINCHED WAIST, I THINK.
GETTING MARRIED IS HARDER THAN IT SEEMS!
WELL, MY LADY, BY THIS TIME TOMORROW IT WILL ALL BE OVER.
AMADAN... YOU TOLD ME ONCE THAT SOMEONE NOT OF THE ROYAL LINE COULD BE KING OR QUEEN, BUT... I'VE HEARD THAT ONLY A BEING OF PURE *FAERIE* BLOOD CAN EVER BE CROWNED.
SO SAYS THE LAW, MY LADY.
BUT... WHEN I FIRST CAME TO... THE COURT, BLOSSOM AND FIREFLY, AND COWSLIP, THEY SAW ME -- AS I WAS THEN --
IT HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. SIMPLE, REPEATED SUGGESTION --
-- THEIR WILLS ARE NOT VERY STRONG.
NOT. NEARLY SO STRONG AS YOURS.
THANK YOU, AMADAN. YOU'VE DONE ME GOOD SERVICE.
BE SURE YOU KEEP THAT WITH YOU ALWAYS.
YES.

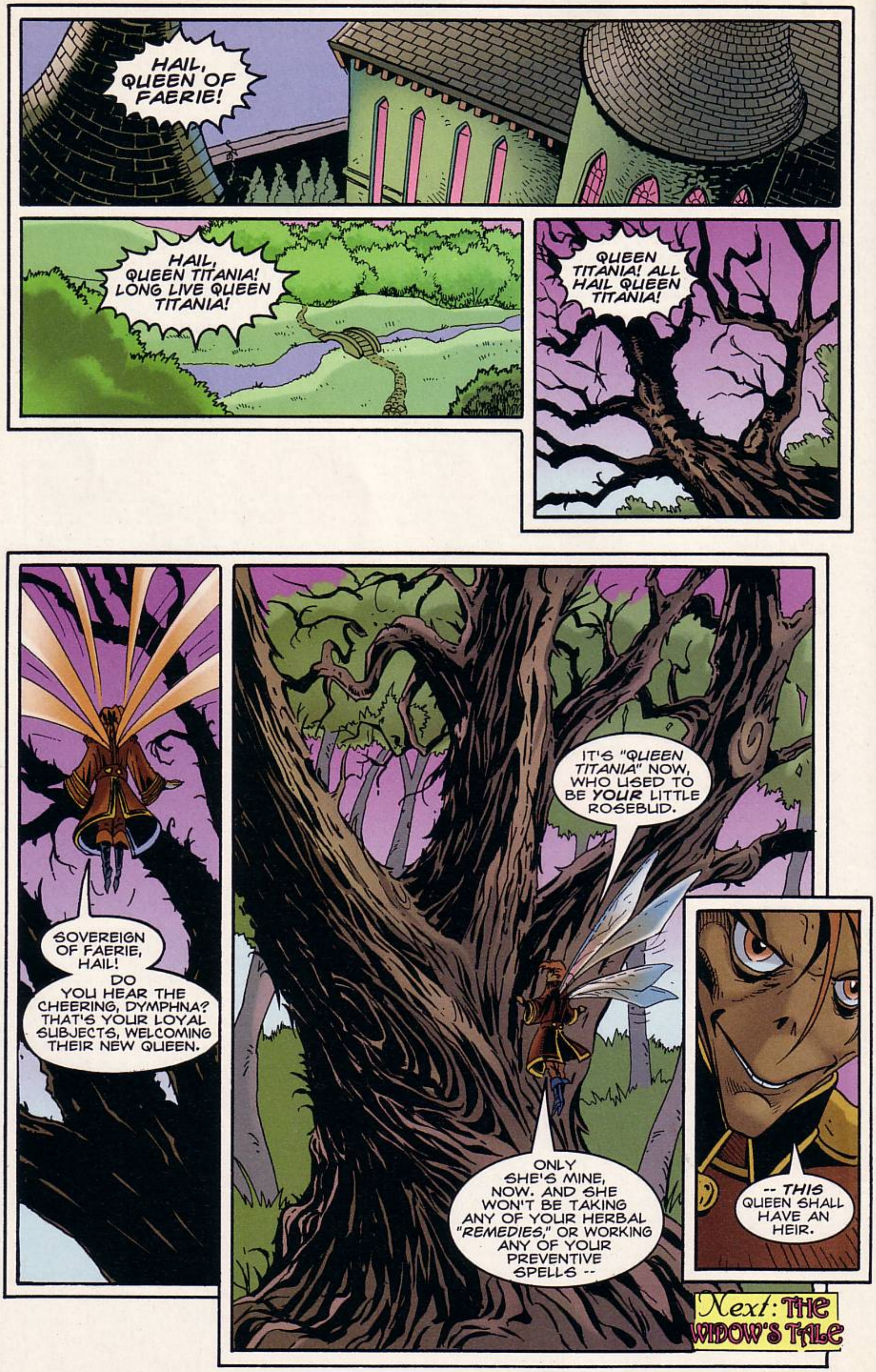

AND HOW SHALL I CHOOSE A GOWN?
AND HOW SHALL YOU CHOOSE A NAME?
WHAT?
YOUR NAME, MY LADY. YOUR CORONATION NAME.
YOU MUST HAVE GIVEN IT SOME THOUGHT.
NO. NO, I HAVEN'T. I DIDN'T REALIZE...
WHEN YOU ARE CROWNED, YOU MUST TAKE ANOTHER NAME -- SOMETHING MORE REGAL, PERHAPS. IT WOULD NEVER DO TO BE "QUEEN ROSEBUD."
Oh, NO. CERTAINLY NOT.
WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST, GOOD AMADAN?
IT MUST BE YOUR OWN CHOICE, MY LADY. BUT THINK OF SOMETHING STRONG, POWERFUL -- TO REFLECT YOUR NEW POSITION. I LEAVE YOU TO IT. FAREWELL!
FAREWELL....


Ah, THE AMADAN! HOW GOES IT?
ALL IS IN READINESS, YOUR MAJESTY.
YOU'VE DONE US GOOD SERVICE, AMADAN. COME, REST WITH US HERE.
YOU KNOW IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OUR DEAREST WISH TO SEE AN HEIR TO THE THRONE OF FAERIE. OUR KIND HAVE SO FEW CHILDREN OF OUR OWN --
-- AND SO MANY WE'VE TAKEN FROM THE EARTHWORLD. YOU, AMADAN, YOU *KNOW* THAT WE LOVED QUEEN DYMPHNA. WE TRULY LOVED HER. BUT WHEN SO MANY YEARS PASSED, AND SHE BORE NO CHILDREN...


AND YOU, GOOD AMADAN, YOU ARE **CERTAIN** THIS SWEET YOUNG FLOWER WILL BEAR FRUIT? YOU ARE **SURE** THAT WE SHALL HAVE AN HEIR AT LAST?
AS I HAVE TOLD YOUR MAJESTY, IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE LADY ROSEBUD WILL BEAR CHILDREN.
CHILDREN! NOT JUST A CHILD, BUT **CHILDREN!**
YOU HAVE MADE US A HAPPY KING, AMADAN, AND WE SHALL REWARD YOU.
I ASK NOTHING FROM YOU, YOUR MAJESTY --
-- THIS MARRIAGE IS ITS OWN REWARD.


HERE SHE COMES!
Oooh, AIN'T SHE LOVELY!


WHAT NAME DO YOU TAKE AS QUEEN OF FAERIE?
I AM CALLED... TITANIA!
HAIL, TITANIA!
HAIL, QUEEN TITANIA! LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!


HAIL, QUEEN OF FAERIE!
HAIL, QUEEN TITANIA! LONG LIVE QUEEN TITANIA!
QUEEN TITANIA! ALL HAIL QUEEN TITANIA!
SOVEREIGN OF FAERIE, HAIL!
DO YOU HEAR THE CHEERING, DYMPHNA? THAT'S YOUR LOYAL SUBJECTS, WELCOMING THEIR NEW QUEEN.
IT'S "QUEEN TITANIA" NOW, WHO USED TO BE YOUR LITTLE ROSEBUD.
ONLY SHE'S MINE, NOW. AND SHE WON'T BE TAKING ANY OF YOUR HERBAL "REMEDIES," OR WORKING ANY OF YOUR PREVENTIVE SPELLS --
-- THIS QUEEN SHALL HAVE AN HEIR.
Next: THE WIDOW'S TALE

THE BOOKS OF FAERIE

COVER ART:
HERMANN MEJIA

LOGO DESIGN:
TIMOTHY ZACH

Since this is the first issue of THE BOOKS OF FAERIE, we don't have any of your letters in yet (as of this writing, this issue hasn't hit the stands). So I thought I'd take this opportunity to have a chat with the writer, Bronwyn Carlton. Peter Gross, the artist, is still toiling away on the next two issues, so you'll have to wait to hear his side of things. Please feel free to write us with your thoughts on this issue and the next two. Even if I don't receive them in time for publication in THE BOOKS OF FAERIE, I'll find space for them in THE BOOKS OF MAGIC's monthly letter column. Thanks in advance, and now, a short conversation with Bronwyn.

—Julie Rottenberg

. . . .

JR: So how did you get into comics? Did you read them as a kid?

BC: Of course. I started with the usual kid stuff — Disney, but only the ones that looked different and cool. I'd pick up *Scrooge McDuck* if it had a Gyro Gearloose story with the little lightbulb Helper, or *Little Lulu* if it had the witch in the forest. I always fell for Little Hotstuff, or Tuffy the Ghost, because they *looked* like they'd be cool. (But they never were; they were always lame.) Then I moved on to SUPERMAN — I was a *big* SUPERMAN fan when I was a little kid. I also read GREEN LANTERN, GREEN ARROW, BATMAN — when I was 9 or 10 years old. Later, I became a huge Marvel fan and I *only* read Marvel. I was so in love in Ben Grimm of the *Fantastic Four.* I had a huge crush on him. He had a girlfriend who was blind, but I thought, "*I* wouldn't have to be blind to love him! *I* would understand him!" Then I dropped him for Ghostrider, because *he* had a motorcycle and a leather jacket and a skullface, and his head was on fire. He was *way* cooler.

JR: So why'd you drop *him*?

BC: Well, I finally figured out that none of these people were *real,* they were all just comics. *Then,* I saw an S. Clay Wilson story about pirates and it just blew the top of my head off and changed my life completely. It really turned me into the person I am today.

JR: What was it about?

BC: Well, I can't describe it here — it was pretty filthy! So then I only read underground and alternative comics. When I was on the radio with my show—

JR: —Which, for readers outside the New York area, was on WFMU, an alternative, free-forum radio station —

BC: — I did a lot of interviews with alternative comics people, artists and writers. There's a strong connection between alternative music and alternative comics.

JR: And that's how you got hooked up with DC?

BC: Sort of. Andy Helfer contacted me to write the BIG BOOK OF DEATH, because another feature I did on the show was called *News of the Dead,* which was very popular. The program was all about death, and comics, and alternative music. So that got Andy's attention. I think he figured I'd be a good person to write THE BIG BOOK OF DEATH because I knew the topic, and I'd done a lot of work as a writer in magazines, newspapers, on radio, and even in comics.

JR: So how do you get from THE BIG BOOK OF DEATH to a nice book like BOOKS OF MAGIC or BOOKS OF FAERIE?

BC: I don't think they're that far apart. They're both based in reality. The stuff in THE BIG BOOK OF DEATH is nonfiction, so I had to write it in a way that was interesting and entertaining. The thing that I've tried to do most in BOOKS OF FAERIE is to keep the characters true, and very real-life, and very consistent. If you have a character who has a certain personality, then you have to keep their actions true to that. I tried to make them real. But it's not all sweetness and light in Faerie; there's a lot of grim stuff that goes on there, and lots of bad behavior in general, and death.

JR: What comics do you read now?

BC: My two favorite comics that I read regularly are PREACHER and BOOKS OF MAGIC.

JR: Now *there's* a contrast!

BC: And I think it's because they're both so well done. I enjoy a good story, and good writing, and good art. It's consistent with me to like both; I don't see them as that far apart. I like to try everything.

JR: What else do you read?

BC: CYBERELLA. I have fun reading the throwaway stuff Howard and Don stick in there. But I read *everything.* The newspaper, a gardening book, a magazine about collecting ballpoint pens, PREACHER, Skateboarding magazines, *i-d* (a British alternative fashion magazine). I just got this book about home embalming: how people can embalm their loved ones if they're out in the woods or something and don't have access to funeral homes. I read gun books, survivalist magazines...

JR: Why?

BC: Just because they're there. I'm just totally interested in everything there is in the world. In my backpack right now, I have Confessions of an English Opium Eater, by Thomas De Quincey. I'm very anti-drug, but I'm reading it because it's interesting to read an intelligent description of the effects of drugs.

JR: How different was the experience of writing THE BOOKS OF FAERIE versus writing THE BIG BOOK OF DEATH?

BC: I had a lot more freedom in BOOKS OF FAERIE. In THE BIG BOOK OF DEATH I had to conform to a very rigid 9-panel page, and it was non-fiction, so I had to do a lot of research. But I also did a lot of research for BOOKS OF FAERIE, on things like Celtic shape-shifting myths and British history.

JR: Is there a reason you set the beginning of THE BOOKS OF FAERIE so specifically in 11th-century England?

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BC: I wanted to show Titania as coming from a really horrifying childhood, feeling abandoned and without any dependable adults. She could depend on Gran for the time she was with her, but that was only temporary. As a kid, she's surrounded by people dying from the plague, and at that young age, she thinks that's what the world is about. I thought the plague in 11th-century England was right because things were so much more primitive than, say, in the 16th-century plague, when there were cities and doctors, and more going on. In the 11th century, people were living in these crude huts, and there was absolutely nothing there. It explains why Titania became the person she did. A lot of her selfish behavior later on comes from a survival instinct — from seeing all this hopelessness and the contrast between the grey coldness of England and the beauty and warmth and security of Faerie. She doesn't really know what the earthworld is like, other than this cold, grey place of death.

JR: What originally interested you about Titania and Auberon?

BC: I love Shakespeare and I think it's clever the way the fairies are used and integrated in BOOKS OF MAGIC. I went on a Shakespeare jag once, and I not only read all his plays, I saw productions of *every* play he wrote (at the Oregon Shakespeare festival, and on PBS), and read a lot of the source material that he took his plots from. So I'm real conversant with it. When writing BOOKS OF FAERIE I tried to keep the tone and the rhythm true to Shakespeare, without specifically using archaic terms but holding onto the *sound* of the speech.

JR: Do you have a favorite Shakespeare play?

BC: That one where they cut out the woman's tongue...

JR: *Titus Andronicus*! I love that one. Very bloody.

BC: Yep. Also, some of my writing comes from stories my Grandma told me. We have a big storytelling tradition in my family. We'd entertain ourselves by sitting around and telling ghost stories. Even if you'd heard a story before, it was fun to hear somebody else tell it.

JR: — Which connects directly to your writing a story that's founded in a story that John Ney Rieber told in BOOKS OF MAGIC — using that end scene from issue #13 as your jumping-off point. John pointed out that he didn't use certain words or punctuation in the original scene, and I said we're hearing the same story but from a different perspective.

BC: As if being told by someone else who was there who remembered it differently.

JR: The same thing applies to the characters involved. *John's* Titania and Auberon aren't *Neil Gaiman's* Titania and Auberon, which aren't *Shakespeare's* Titania and Auberon—

BC: —Which aren't mine. Part of the fun of hearing a good story is the skill of the storyteller. I left a lot of doors ajar in this plot, little bits here and there so that John or someone else can pick something up and expand on it in BOOKS OF MAGIC. Or, we can take other things that are introduced in BOOKS OF FAERIE and do more with them elsewhere. There's a troll in BOOKS OF FAERIE Book 3 that I'd really like to do a lot more with. He's mentioned once in Book 2, and appears only for one page in Book 3, but to me he's a really engaging character and I'd like to use him again. There's a lot more to learn about Obrey, too. What happened to him, really? What happens to Dymphna? Does she ever get out of the tree? Where does Tamlin go? Where was Auberon all the years he was away?

JR: I know you wanted to talk about what it's been like working with Peter Gross.

BC: Yes, which brings me back to another difference between THE BIG BOOK OF DEATH and this. On the BIG BOOK, we had something like 67 different artists, and I never knew who was going to do which story I was writing, so I had to keep things fairly simple. But with Peter, because I know how great he is as an artist, I can do *anything*. I'm not restricted at all. In Book 2 there are five pages of two people talking outside in the dark, and I knew Peter could pull that off! I don't know if anyone else could do it, but I knew that Peter could. If I were working with another artist, I might not even write the story this way. I'd take into account what the artist was technically capable of. With Peter, I knew I could write *anything* because he's so amazing. I'd actually worked with him as his editor on a story for THE BIG BOOK OF WEIRDOS, and I love his stuff. But I've never seen *anything* like what he's done for this book, the amount of work he's put in, and it's just so beautiful it blows me away. He really seems to understand what I'm doing with the script. I feel like the story's in safe hands with him. He adds so much to it. He's not just illustrating, he's telling the story as well — he does as much storytelling as I do.

And as soon as Peter finishes up his work on the rest of the series, we might even consider loosening up the chains that keep him clamped to his drawing board long enough to let him get a word in here! Thanks again, Bronwyn.

Next: A sudden death shocks all of Faerie, and a devastated Titania sneaks back to the earthworld, where she meets the seductive Tamlin... just as her husband back home decides it's time to produce an heir. Be here, one month from now, as Bronwyn, Peter, Gloria, and Richard put it all together, in "The Widow's Tale."

—Julie

VERTIGO

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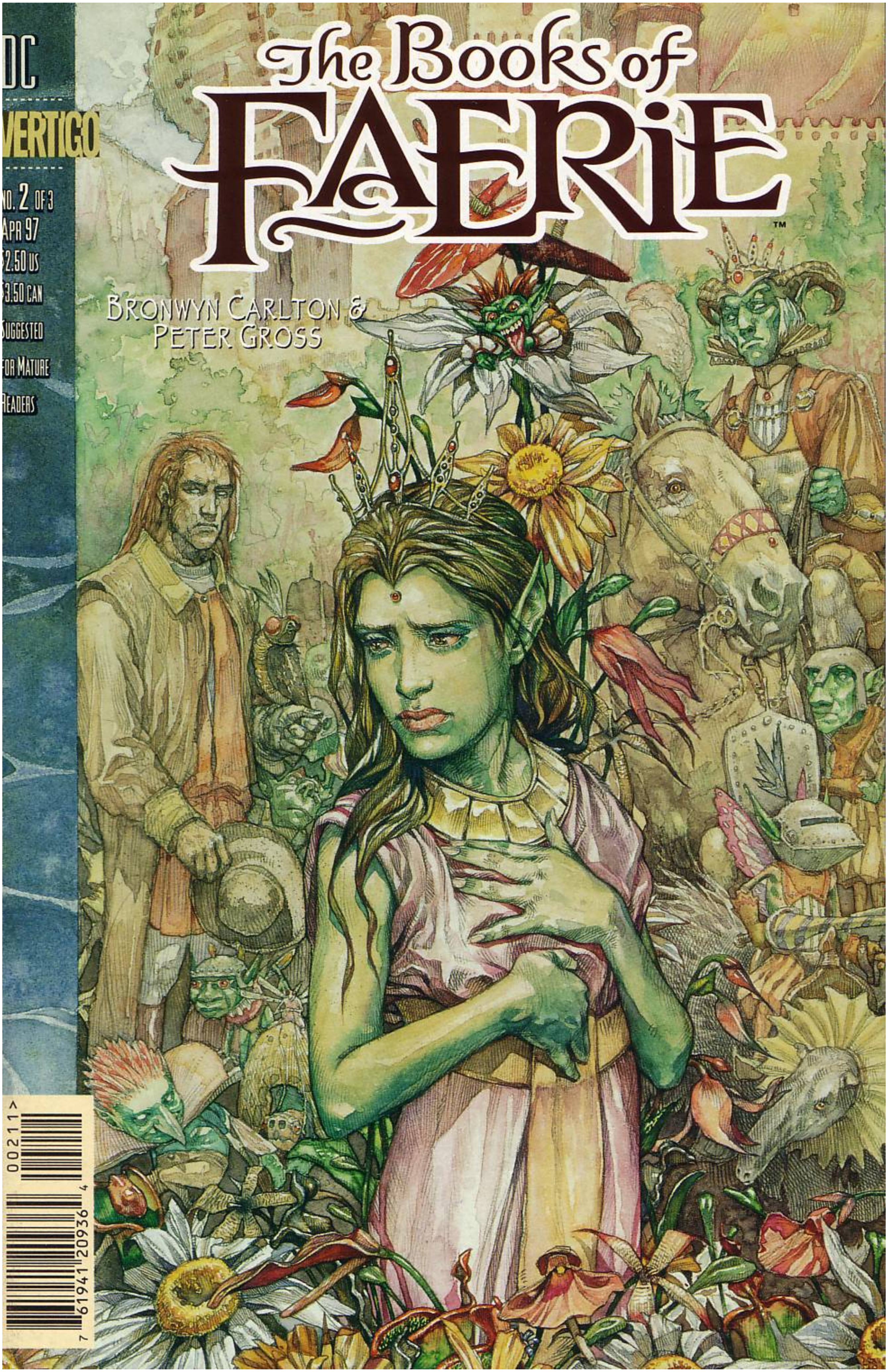
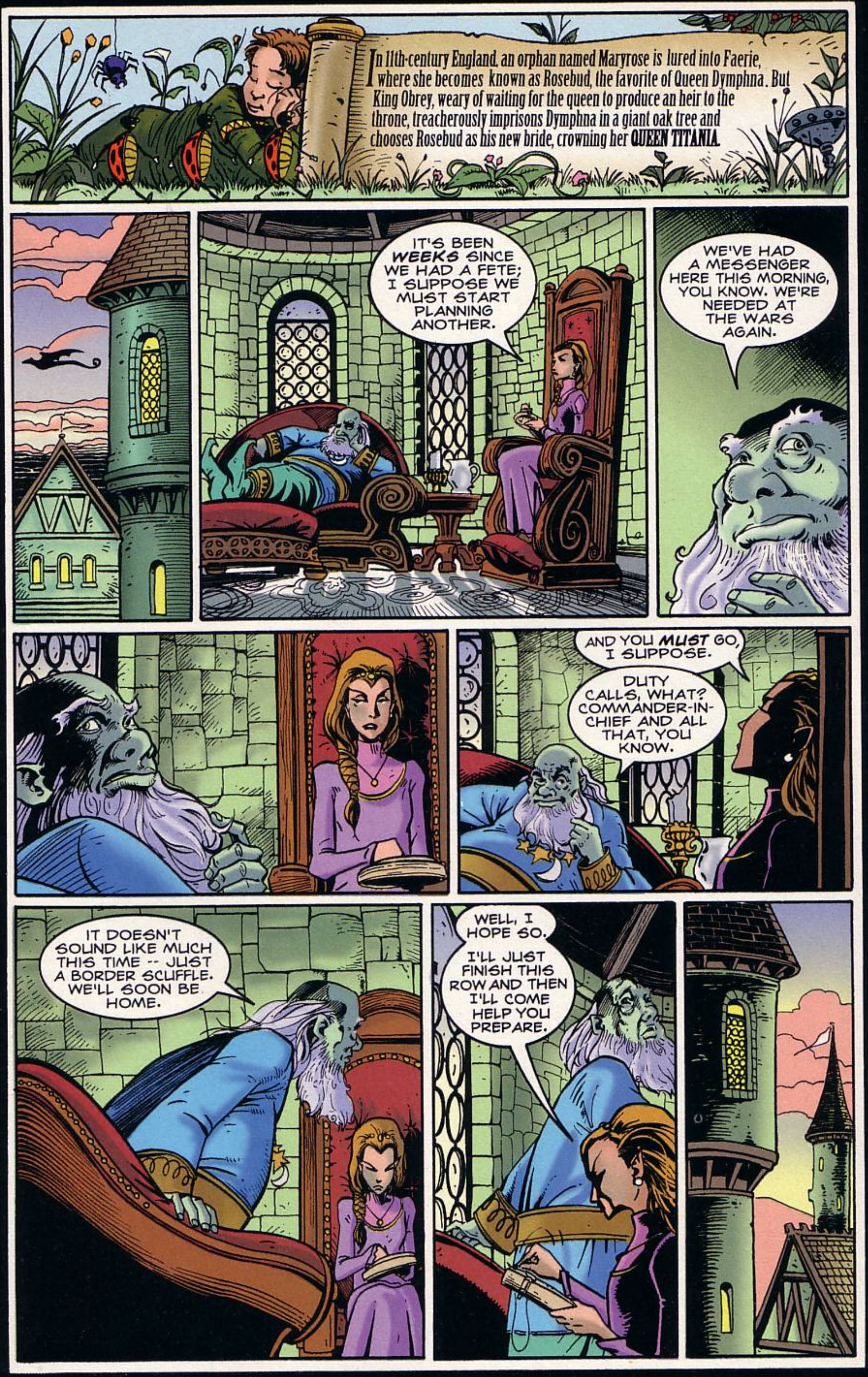
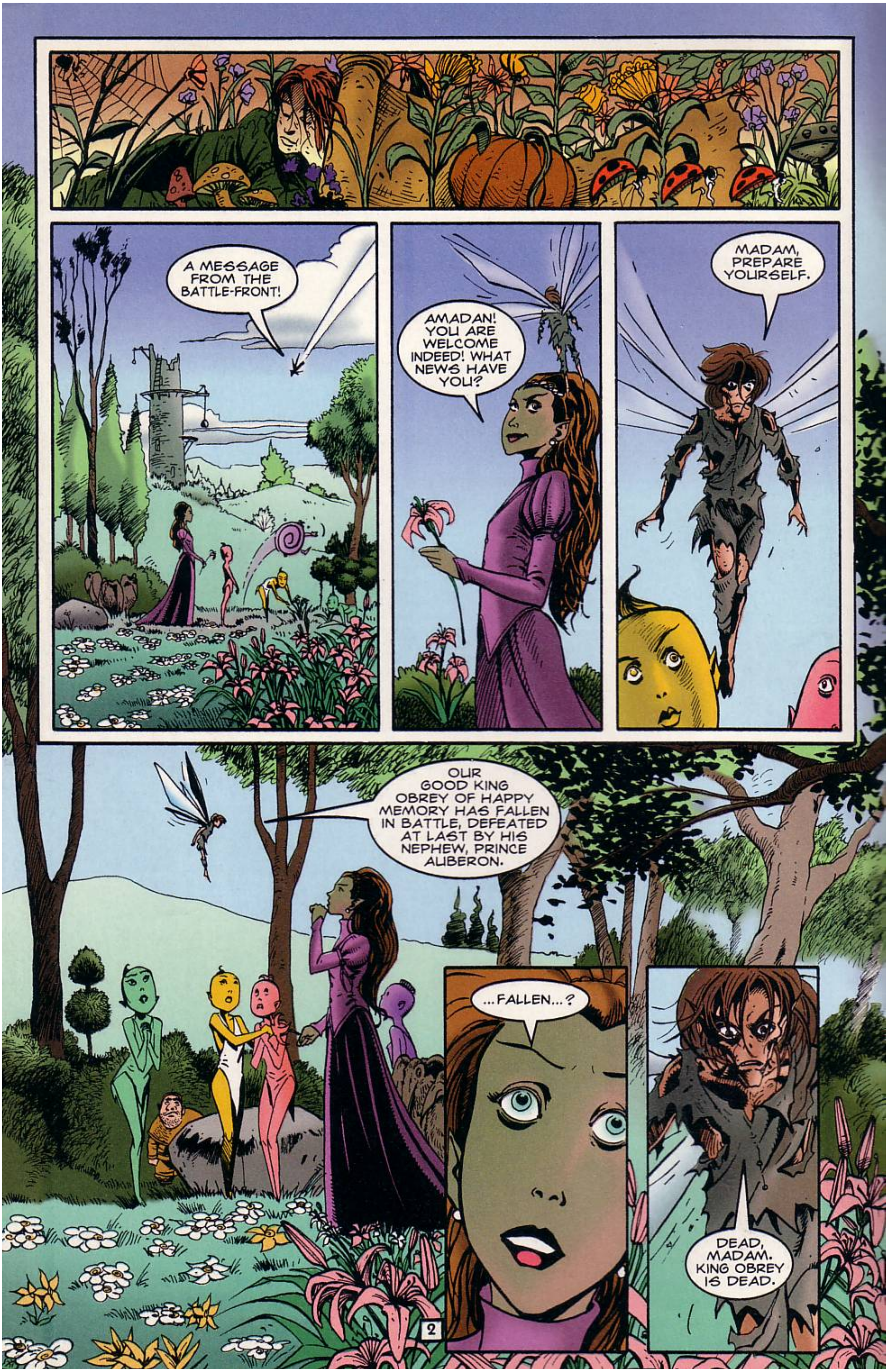
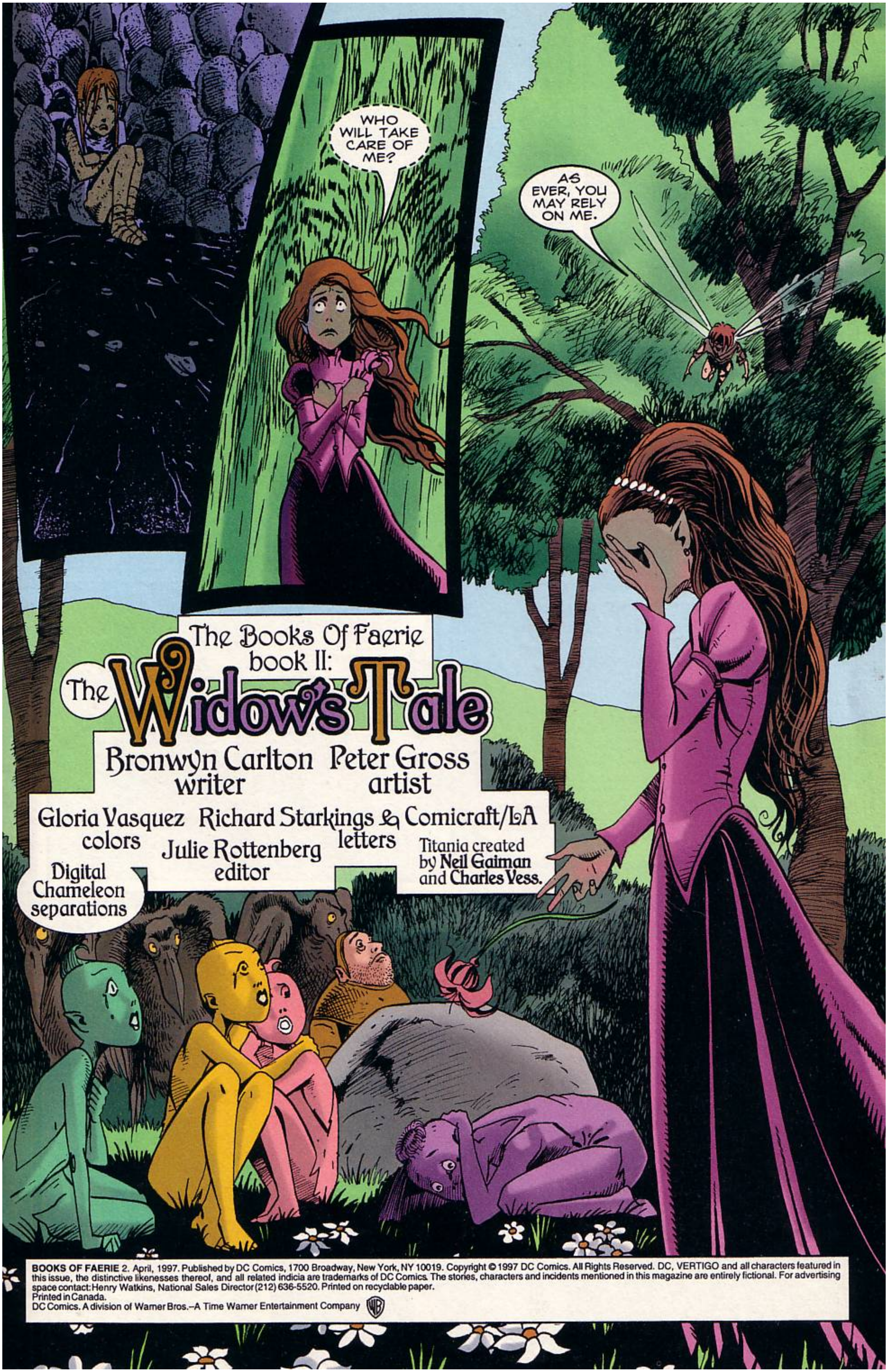
Suggested for Mature Readers

Bronwyn Carlton & Peter Gross




In 11th-century England, an orphan named Maryrose is lured into Faerie, where she becomes known as Rosebud, the favorite of Queen Dymphna. But King Obrey, weary of waiting for the queen to produce an heir to the throne, treacherously imprisons Dymphna in a giant oak tree and chooses Rosebud as his new bride, crowning her QUEEN TITANIA.
IT'S BEEN WEEKS SINCE WE HAD A FETE; I SUPPOSE WE MUST START PLANNING ANOTHER.
WE'VE HAD A MESSENGER HERE THIS MORNING, YOU KNOW. WE'RE NEEDED AT THE WARS AGAIN.
AND YOU MUST GO, I SUPPOSE.
DUTY CALLS, WHAT? COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND ALL THAT, YOU KNOW.
IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE MUCH THIS TIME -- JUST A BORDER SCUFFLE. WE'LL SOON BE HOME.
WELL, I HOPE SO.
I'LL JUST FINISH THIS ROW AND THEN I'LL COME HELP YOU PREPARE.


A MESSAGE FROM THE BATTLE-FRONT!
AMADAN! YOU ARE WELCOME INDEED! WHAT NEWS HAVE YOU?
MADAM, PREPARE YOURSELF.
OUR GOOD KING OBREY OF HAPPY MEMORY HAS FALLEN IN BATTLE, DEFEATED AT LAST BY HIS NEPHEW, PRINCE AUBERON.
...FALLEN...?
DEAD, MADAM. KING OBREY IS DEAD.


WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF ME?
AS EVER, YOU MAY RELY ON ME.

The Books Of Faerie book II: The Widow's Tale

Bronwyn Carlton writer
Peter Gross artist
Gloria Vasquez colors
Richard Starkings & Comicraft/LA letters
Julie Rottenberg editor
Digital Chameleon separations
Titania created by **Neil Gaiman** and **Charles Vess.**

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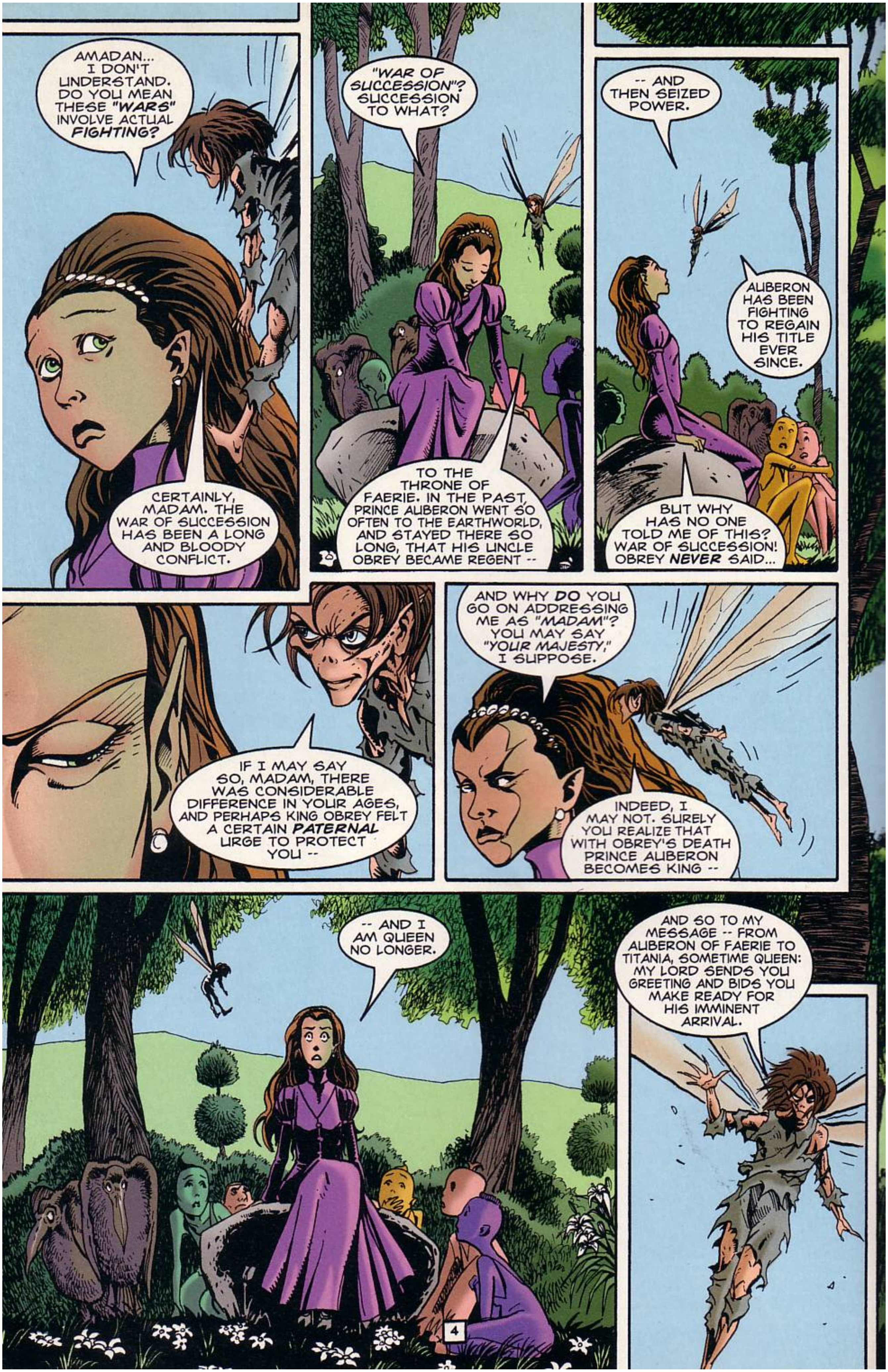
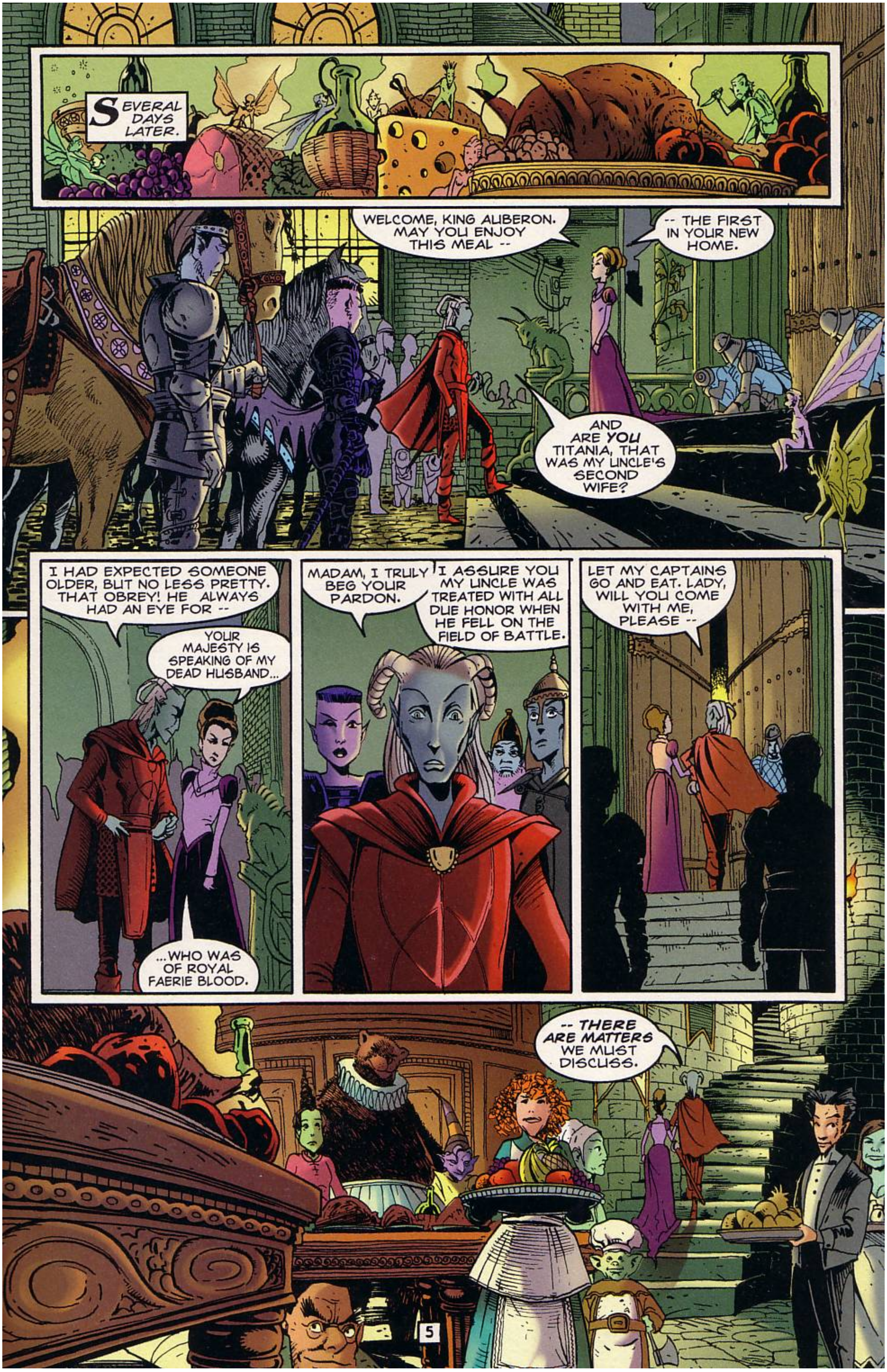
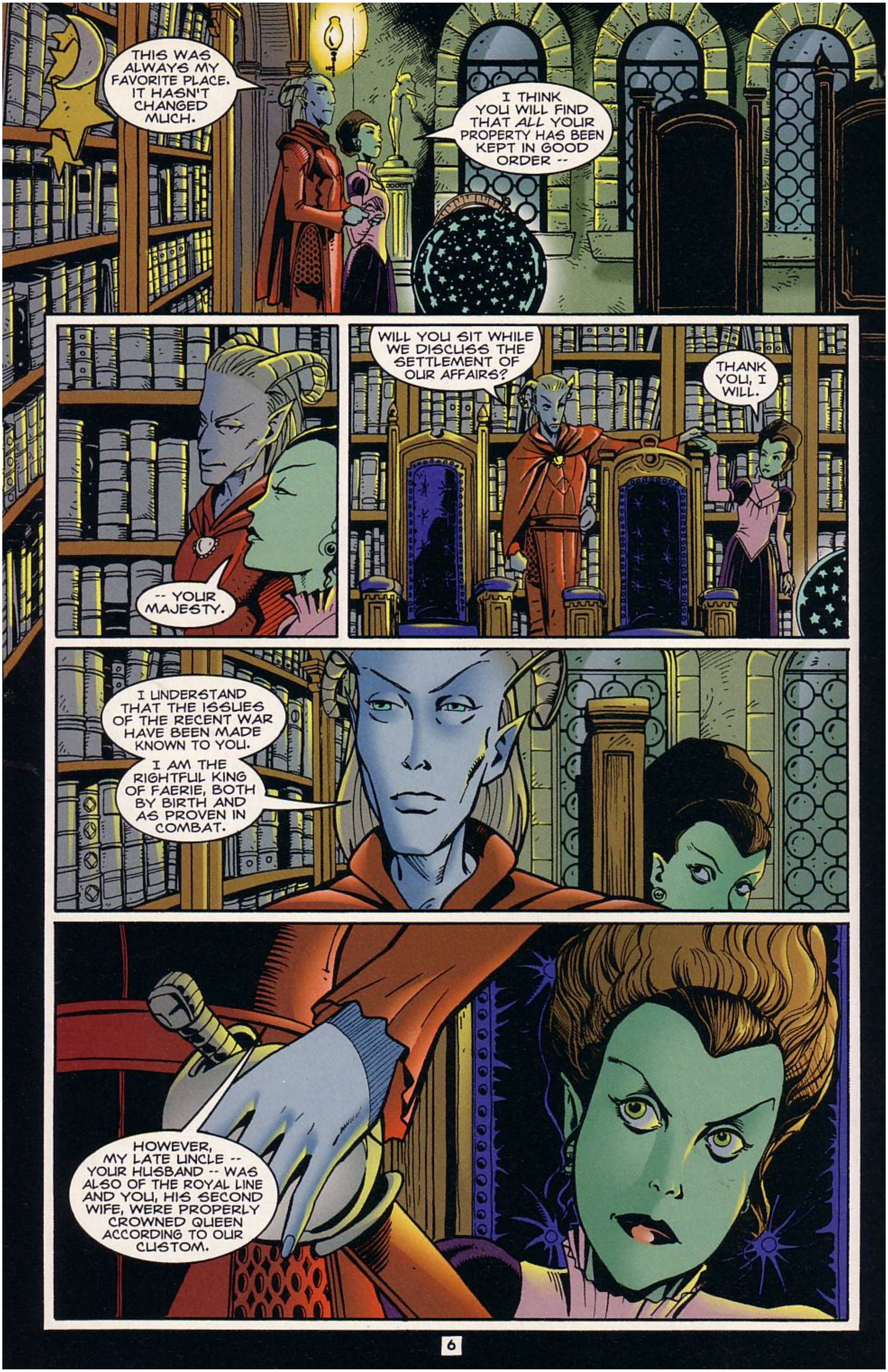
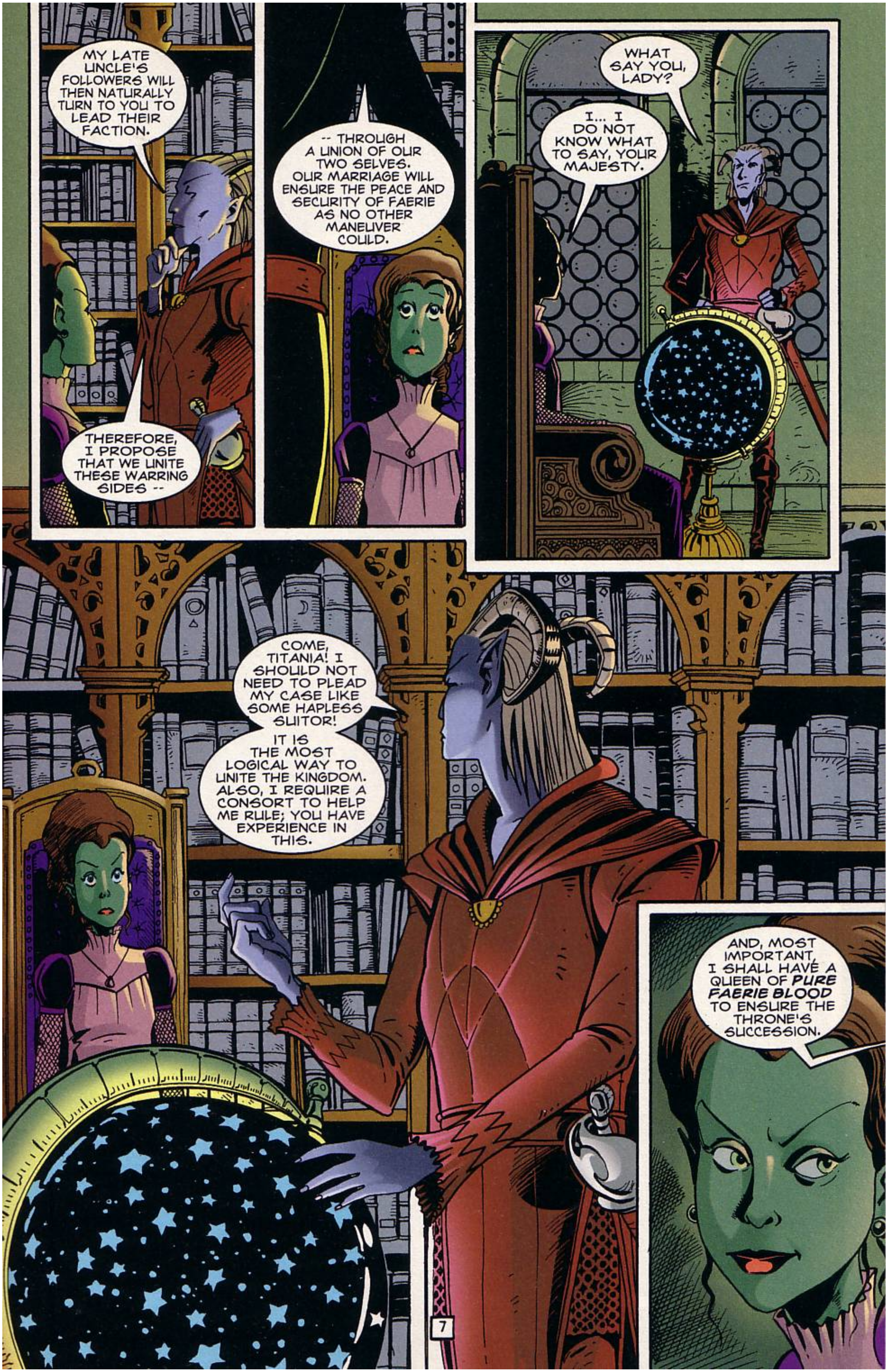
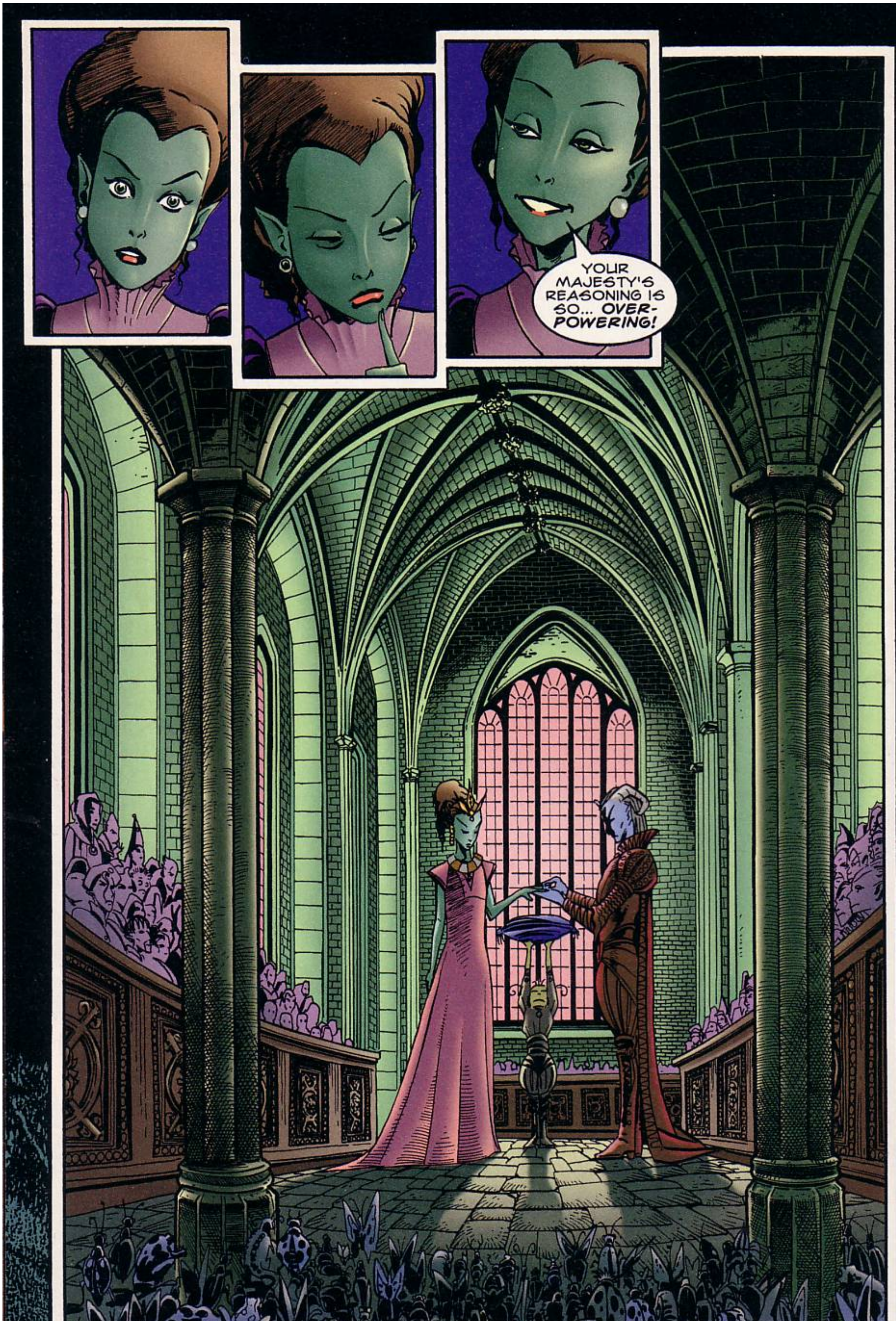
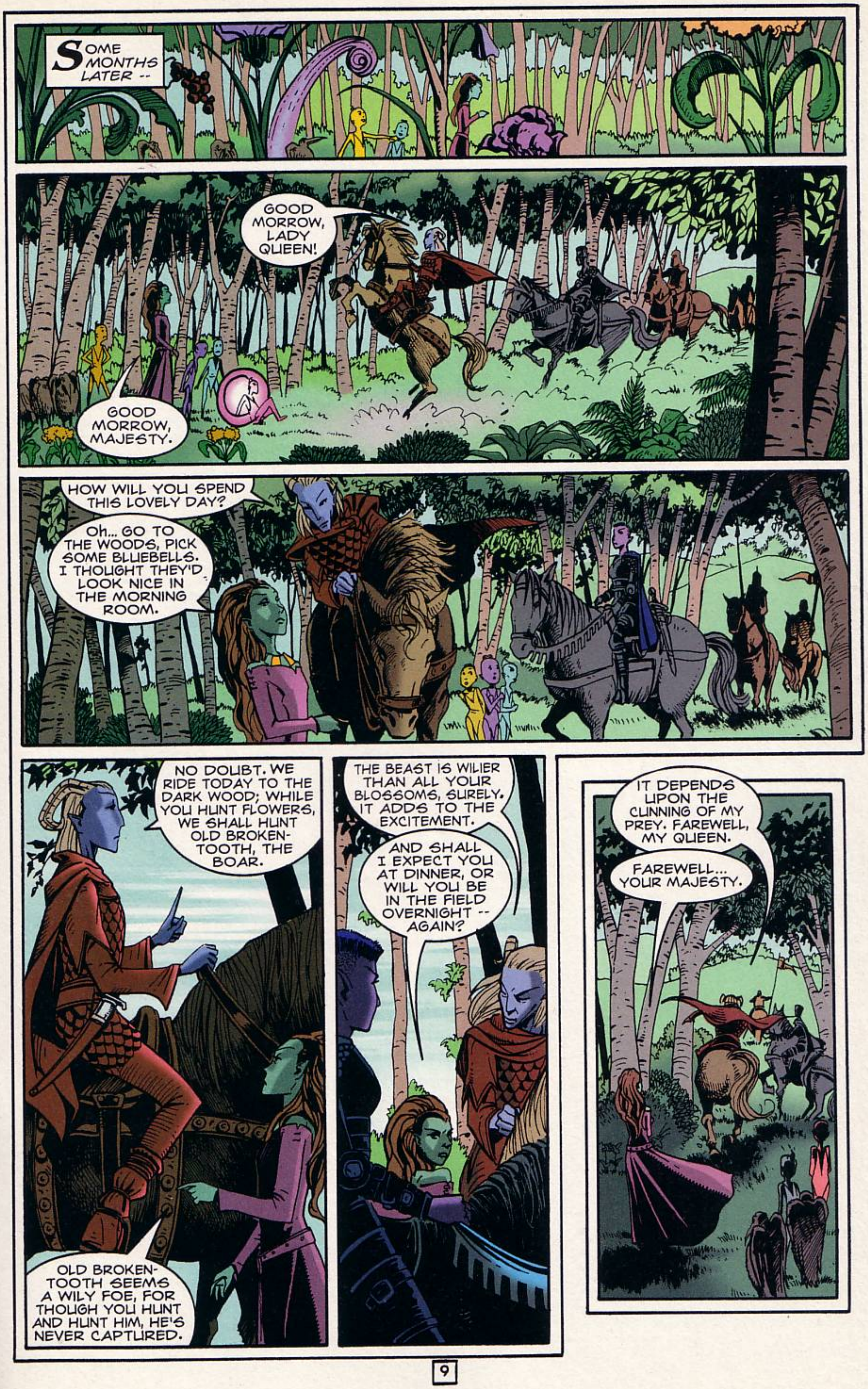

AMADAN... I DON'T UNDERSTAND. DO YOU MEAN THESE *"WARS"* INVOLVE ACTUAL ***FIGHTING?***
CERTAINLY, MADAM. THE WAR OF SUCCESSION HAS BEEN A LONG AND BLOODY CONFLICT.
"WAR OF SUCCESSION"? SUCCESSION TO WHAT?
TO THE THRONE OF FAERIE. IN THE PAST, PRINCE AUBERON WENT SO OFTEN TO THE EARTHWORLD, AND STAYED THERE SO LONG, THAT HIS UNCLE OBREY BECAME REGENT --
-- AND THEN SEIZED POWER.
AUBERON HAS BEEN FIGHTING TO REGAIN HIS TITLE EVER SINCE.
BUT WHY HAS NO ONE TOLD ME OF THIS? WAR OF SUCCESSION! OBREY ***NEVER*** SAID...
IF I MAY SAY SO, MADAM, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE IN YOUR AGES, AND PERHAPS KING OBREY FELT A CERTAIN ***PATERNAL*** URGE TO PROTECT YOU --
AND WHY ***DO*** YOU GO ON ADDRESSING ME AS *"MADAM"*? YOU MAY SAY *"YOUR MAJESTY,"* I SUPPOSE.
INDEED, I MAY NOT. SURELY YOU REALIZE THAT WITH OBREY'S DEATH PRINCE AUBERON BECOMES KING --
-- AND I AM QUEEN NO LONGER.
AND SO TO MY MESSAGE -- FROM AUBERON OF FAERIE TO TITANIA, SOMETIME QUEEN: MY LORD SENDS YOU GREETING AND BIDS YOU MAKE READY FOR HIS IMMINENT ARRIVAL.

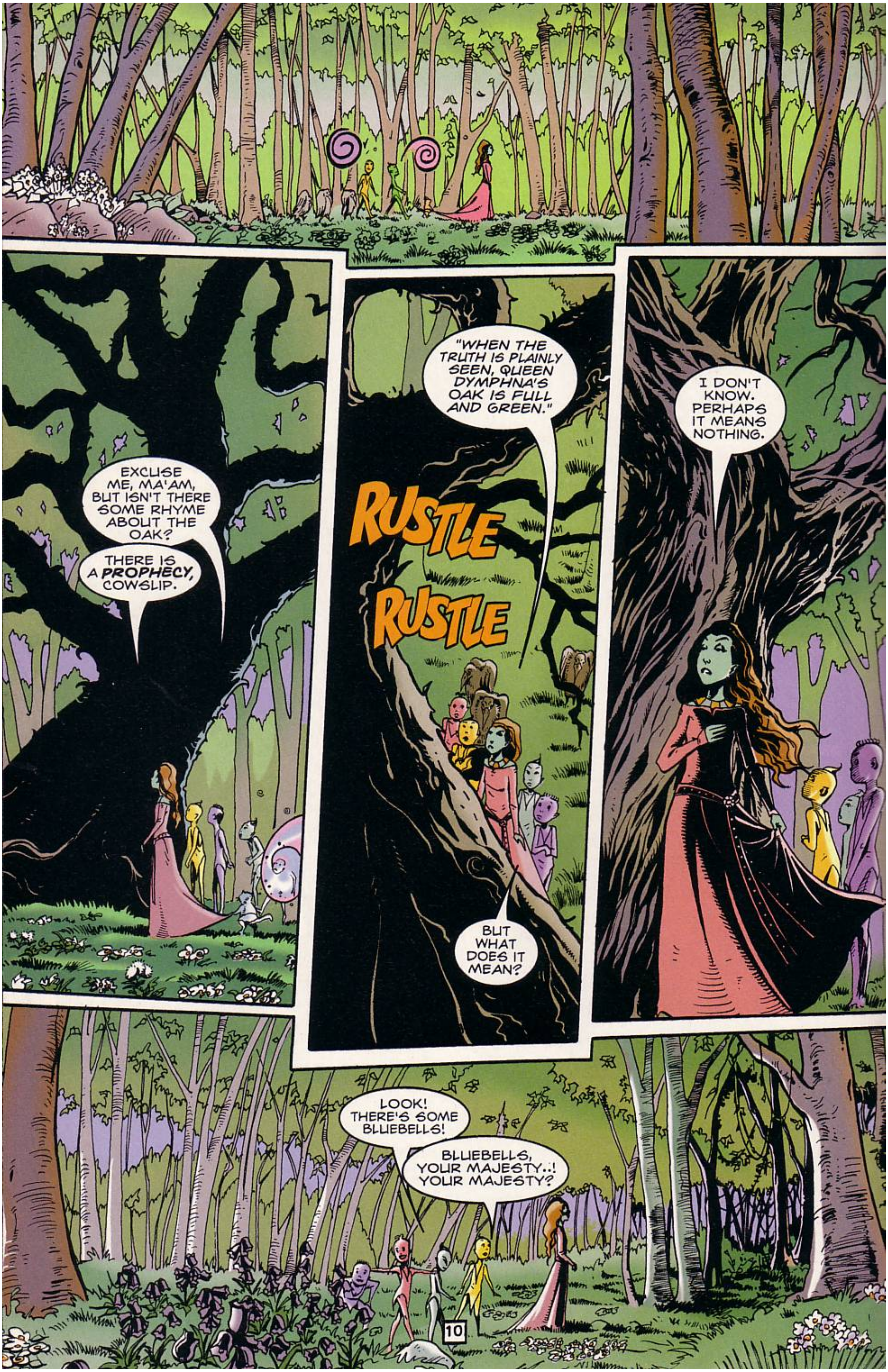

SEVERAL DAYS LATER.
WELCOME, KING AUBERON. MAY YOU ENJOY THIS MEAL --
-- THE FIRST IN YOUR NEW HOME.
AND ARE **YOU** TITANIA, THAT WAS MY UNCLE'S SECOND WIFE?
I HAD EXPECTED SOMEONE OLDER, BUT NO LESS PRETTY. THAT OBREY! HE ALWAYS HAD AN EYE FOR --
YOUR MAJESTY IS SPEAKING OF MY DEAD HUSBAND...
...WHO WAS OF ROYAL FAERIE BLOOD.
MADAM, I TRULY BEG YOUR PARDON.
I ASSURE YOU MY UNCLE WAS TREATED WITH ALL DUE HONOR WHEN HE FELL ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE.
LET MY CAPTAINS GO AND EAT. LADY, WILL YOU COME WITH ME, PLEASE --
-- THERE ARE MATTERS WE MUST DISCUSS.

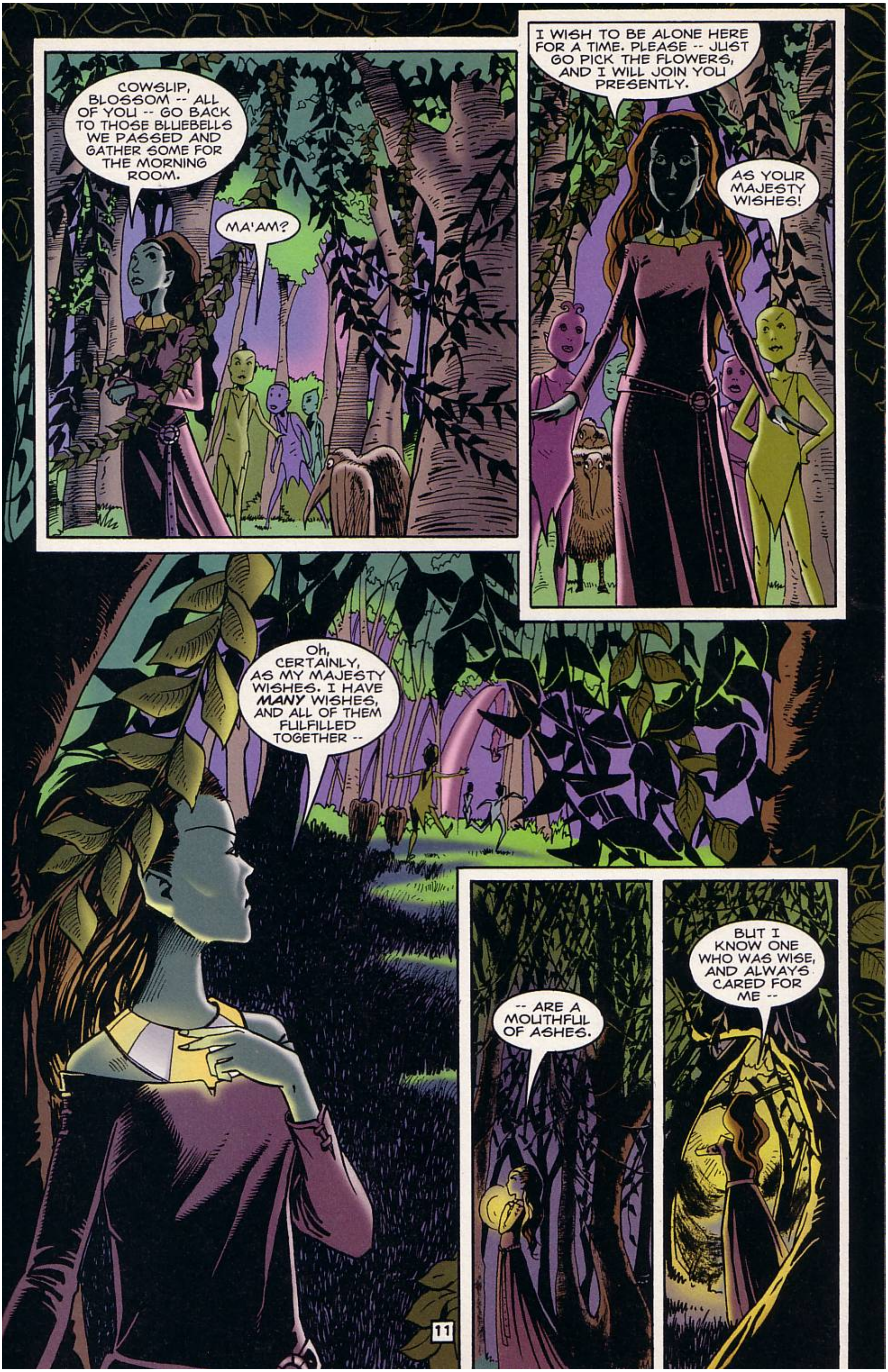

THIS WAS ALWAYS MY FAVORITE PLACE. IT HASN'T CHANGED MUCH.
I THINK YOU WILL FIND THAT *ALL* YOUR PROPERTY HAS BEEN KEPT IN GOOD ORDER --
-- YOUR MAJESTY.
WILL YOU SIT WHILE WE DISCUSS THE SETTLEMENT OF OUR AFFAIRS?
THANK YOU, I WILL.
I UNDERSTAND THAT THE ISSUES OF THE RECENT WAR HAVE BEEN MADE KNOWN TO YOU.
I AM THE RIGHTFUL KING OF FAERIE, BOTH BY BIRTH AND AS PROVEN IN COMBAT.
HOWEVER, MY LATE UNCLE -- YOUR HUSBAND -- WAS ALSO OF THE ROYAL LINE AND YOU, HIS SECOND WIFE, WERE PROPERLY CROWNED QUEEN ACCORDING TO OUR CUSTOM.

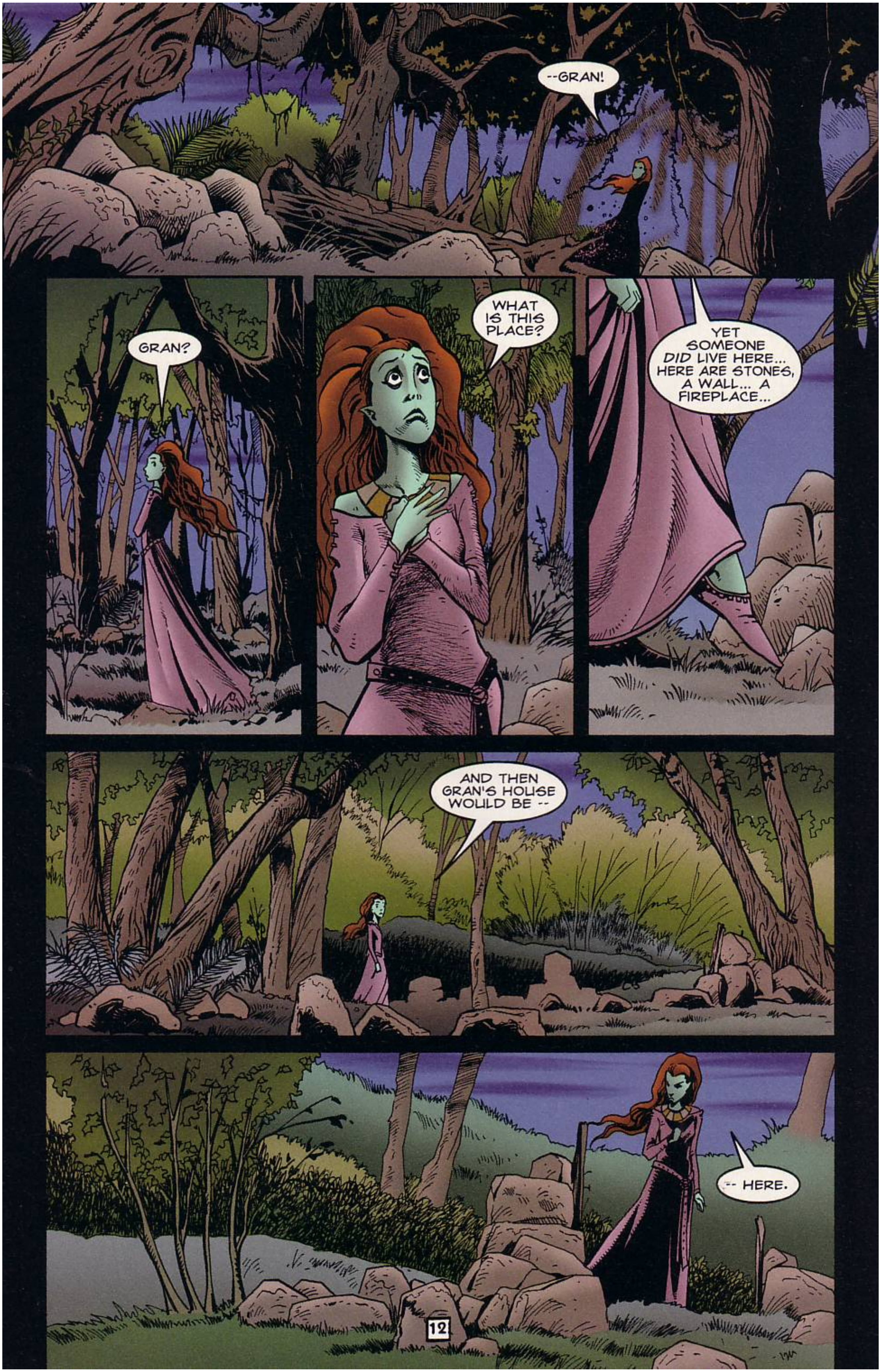

MY LATE UNCLE'S FOLLOWERS WILL THEN NATURALLY TURN TO YOU TO LEAD THEIR FACTION.
THEREFORE, I PROPOSE THAT WE UNITE THESE WARRING SIDES --
-- THROUGH A UNION OF OUR TWO SELVES. OUR MARRIAGE WILL ENSURE THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF FAERIE AS NO OTHER MANEUVER COULD.
WHAT SAY YOU, LADY?
I... I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY, YOUR MAJESTY.
COME, TITANIA! I SHOULD NOT NEED TO PLEAD MY CASE LIKE SOME HAPLESS SUITOR!
IT IS THE MOST LOGICAL WAY TO UNITE THE KINGDOM. ALSO, I REQUIRE A CONSORT TO HELP ME RULE; YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE IN THIS.
AND, MOST IMPORTANT, I SHALL HAVE A QUEEN OF ***PURE FAERIE BLOOD*** TO ENSURE THE THRONE'S SUCCESSION.

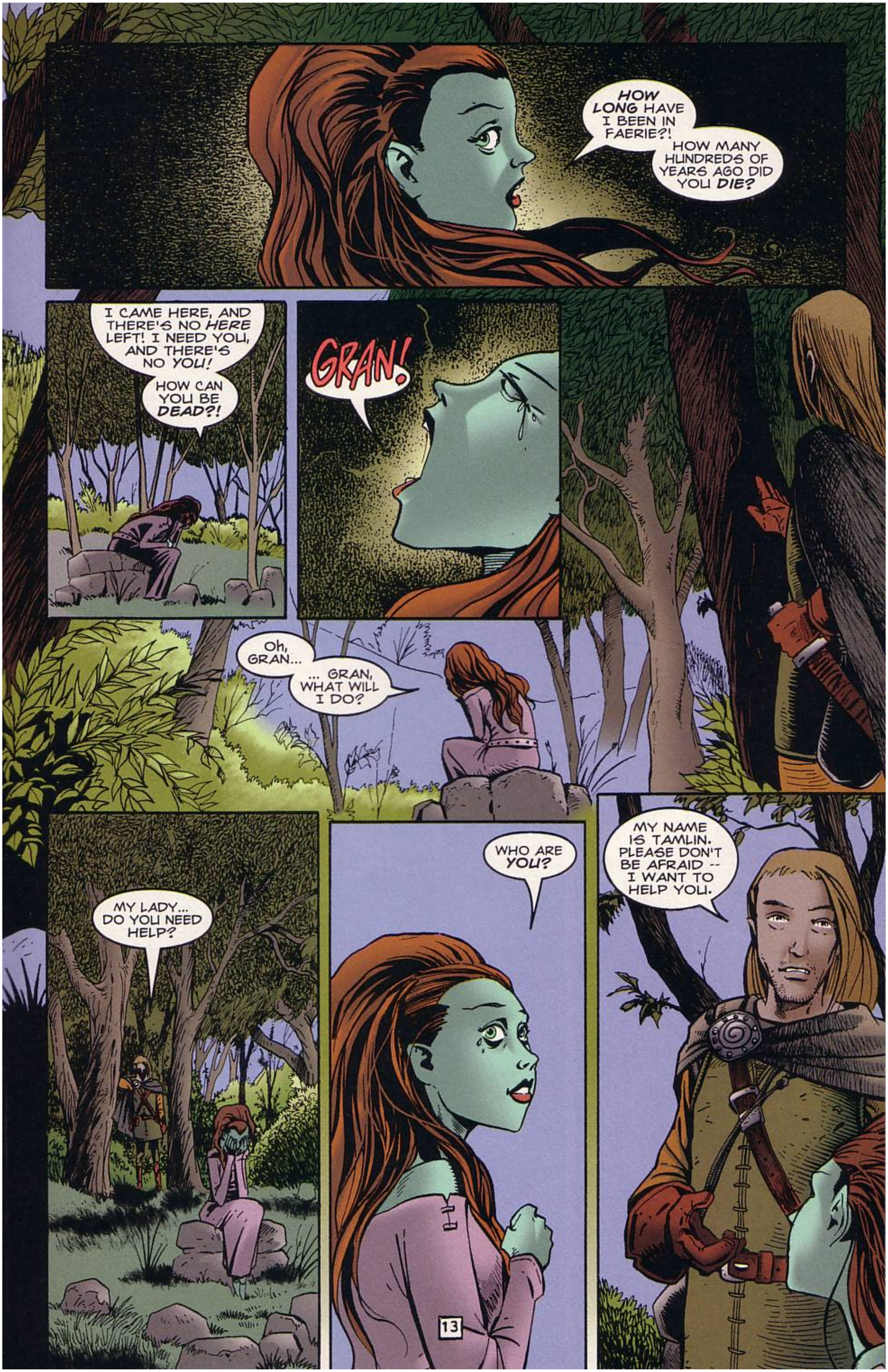

YOUR MAJESTY'S REASONING IS SO... **OVER-POWERING!**

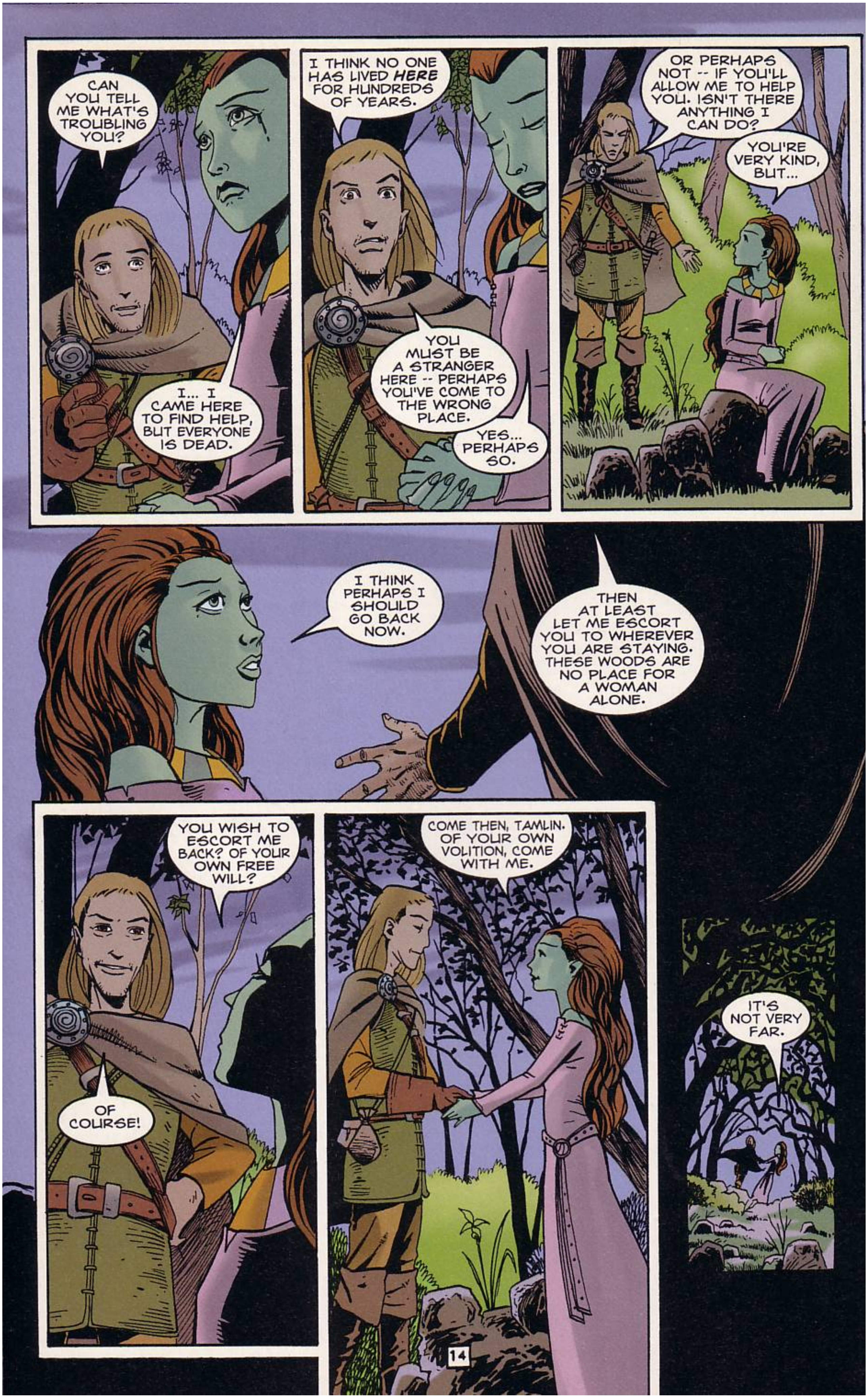

SOME MONTHS LATER --
GOOD MORROW, LADY QUEEN!
GOOD MORROW, MAJESTY.
HOW WILL YOU SPEND THIS LOVELY DAY?
Oh... GO TO THE WOODS, PICK SOME BLUEBELLS. I THOUGHT THEY'D LOOK NICE IN THE MORNING ROOM.
NO DOUBT. WE RIDE TODAY TO THE DARK WOOD; WHILE YOU HUNT FLOWERS, WE SHALL HUNT OLD BROKEN-TOOTH, THE BOAR.
OLD BROKEN-TOOTH SEEMS A WILY FOE, FOR THOUGH YOU HUNT AND HUNT HIM, HE'S NEVER CAPTURED.
THE BEAST IS WILIER THAN ALL YOUR BLOSSOMS, SURELY. IT ADDS TO THE EXCITEMENT.
AND SHALL I EXPECT YOU AT DINNER, OR WILL YOU BE IN THE FIELD OVERNIGHT -- AGAIN?
IT DEPENDS UPON THE CUNNING OF MY PREY. FAREWELL, MY QUEEN.
FAREWELL... YOUR MAJESTY.

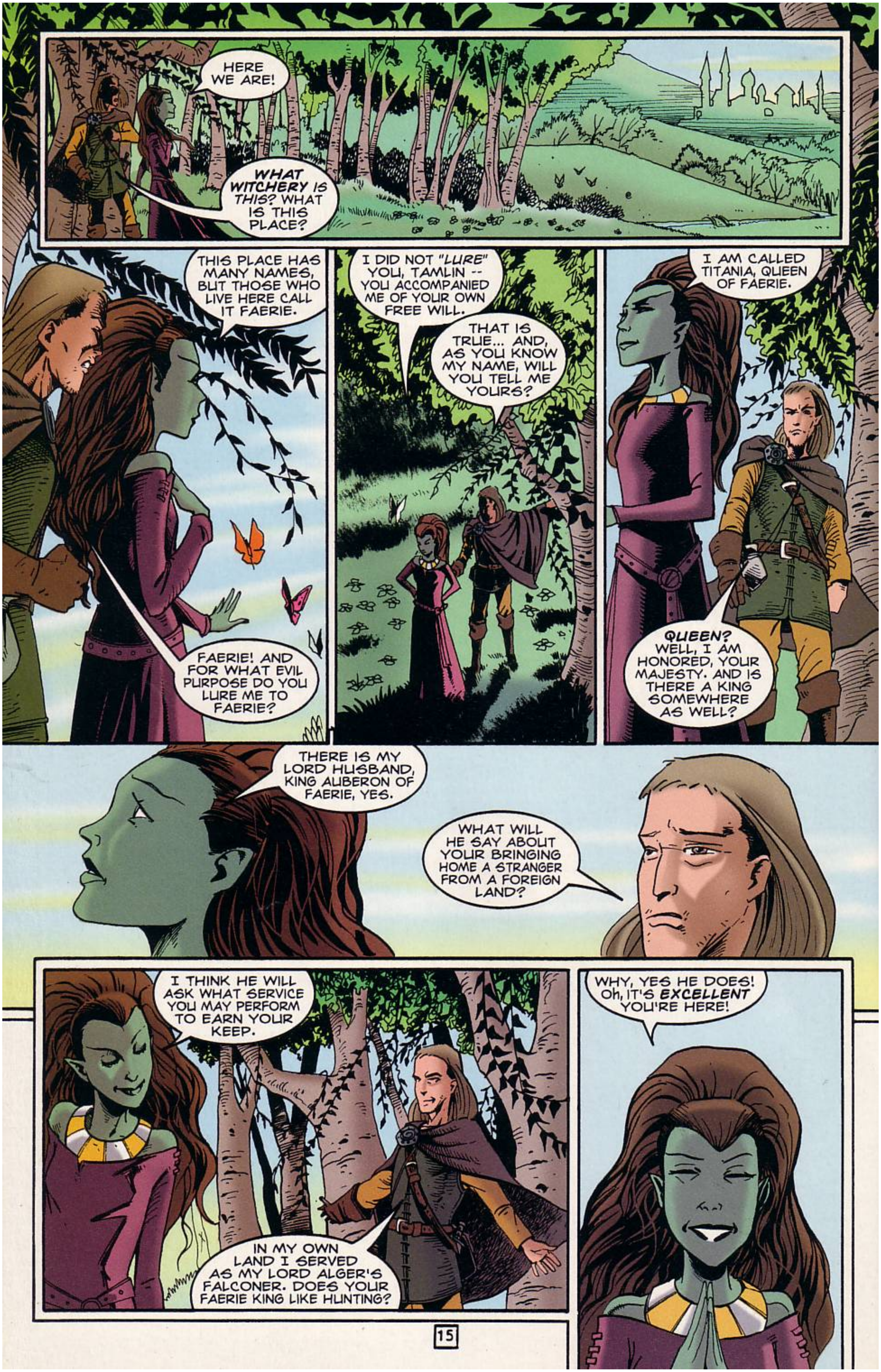

EXCUSE ME, MA'AM, BUT ISN'T THERE SOME RHYME ABOUT THE OAK?
THERE IS A **PROPHECY**, COWSLIP.
"WHEN THE TRUTH IS PLAINLY SEEN, QUEEN DYMPHNA'S OAK IS FULL AND GREEN."
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
I DON'T KNOW. PERHAPS IT MEANS NOTHING.
LOOK! THERE'S SOME BLUEBELLS!
BLUEBELLS, YOUR MAJESTY..! YOUR MAJESTY?

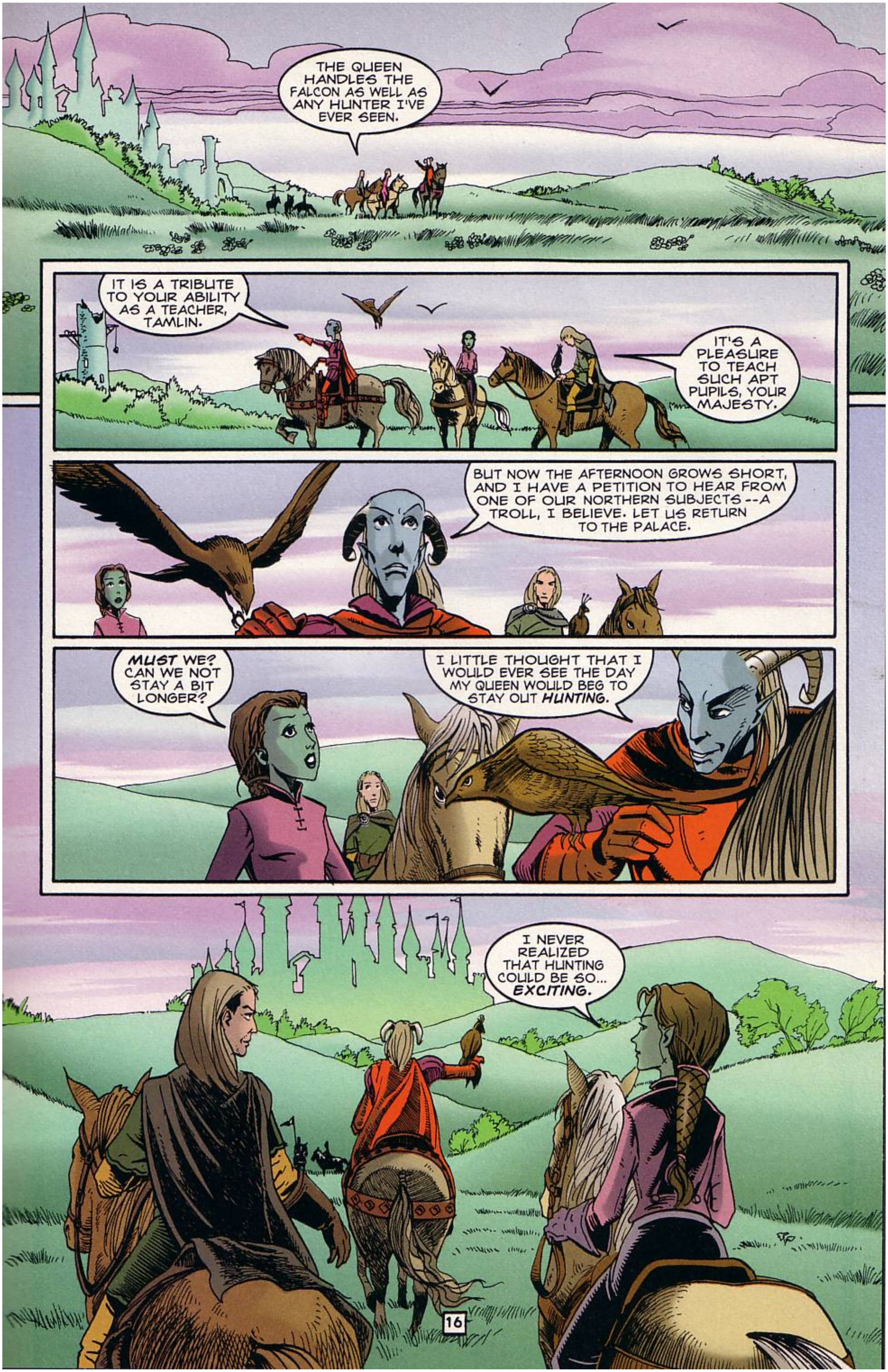

COWSLIP, BLOSSOM -- ALL OF YOU -- GO BACK TO THOSE BLUEBELLS WE PASSED AND GATHER SOME FOR THE MORNING ROOM.
MA'AM?
I WISH TO BE ALONE HERE FOR A TIME. PLEASE -- JUST GO PICK THE FLOWERS, AND I WILL JOIN YOU PRESENTLY.
AS YOUR MAJESTY WISHES!
Oh, CERTAINLY, AS MY MAJESTY WISHES. I HAVE MANY WISHES, AND ALL OF THEM FULFILLED TOGETHER --
-- ARE A MOUTHFUL OF ASHES.
BUT I KNOW ONE WHO WAS WISE, AND ALWAYS CARED FOR ME --

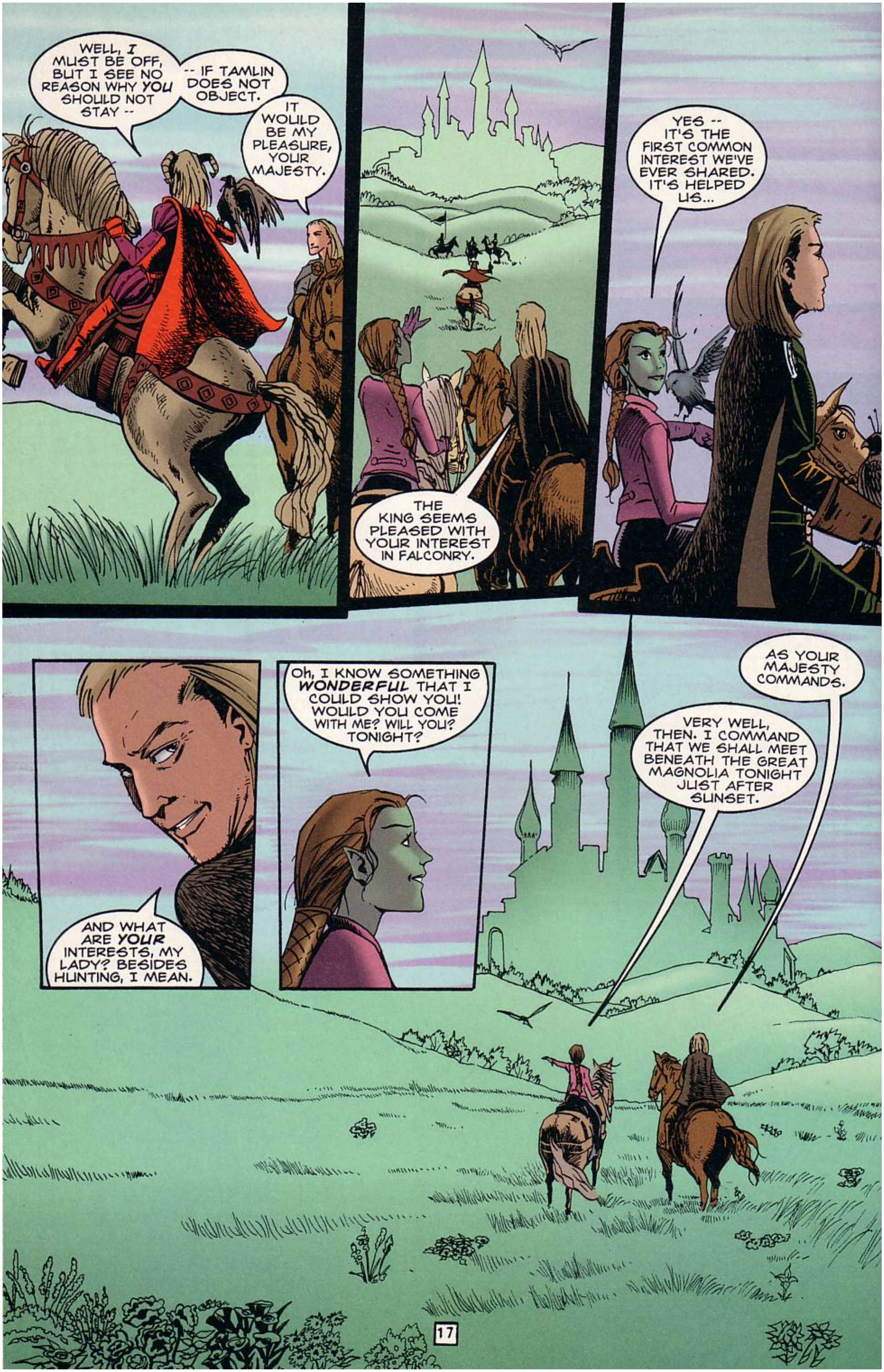

--GRAN!
GRAN?
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
YET SOMEONE *DID* LIVE HERE... HERE ARE STONES, A WALL... A FIREPLACE...
AND THEN GRAN'S HOUSE WOULD BE --
-- HERE.

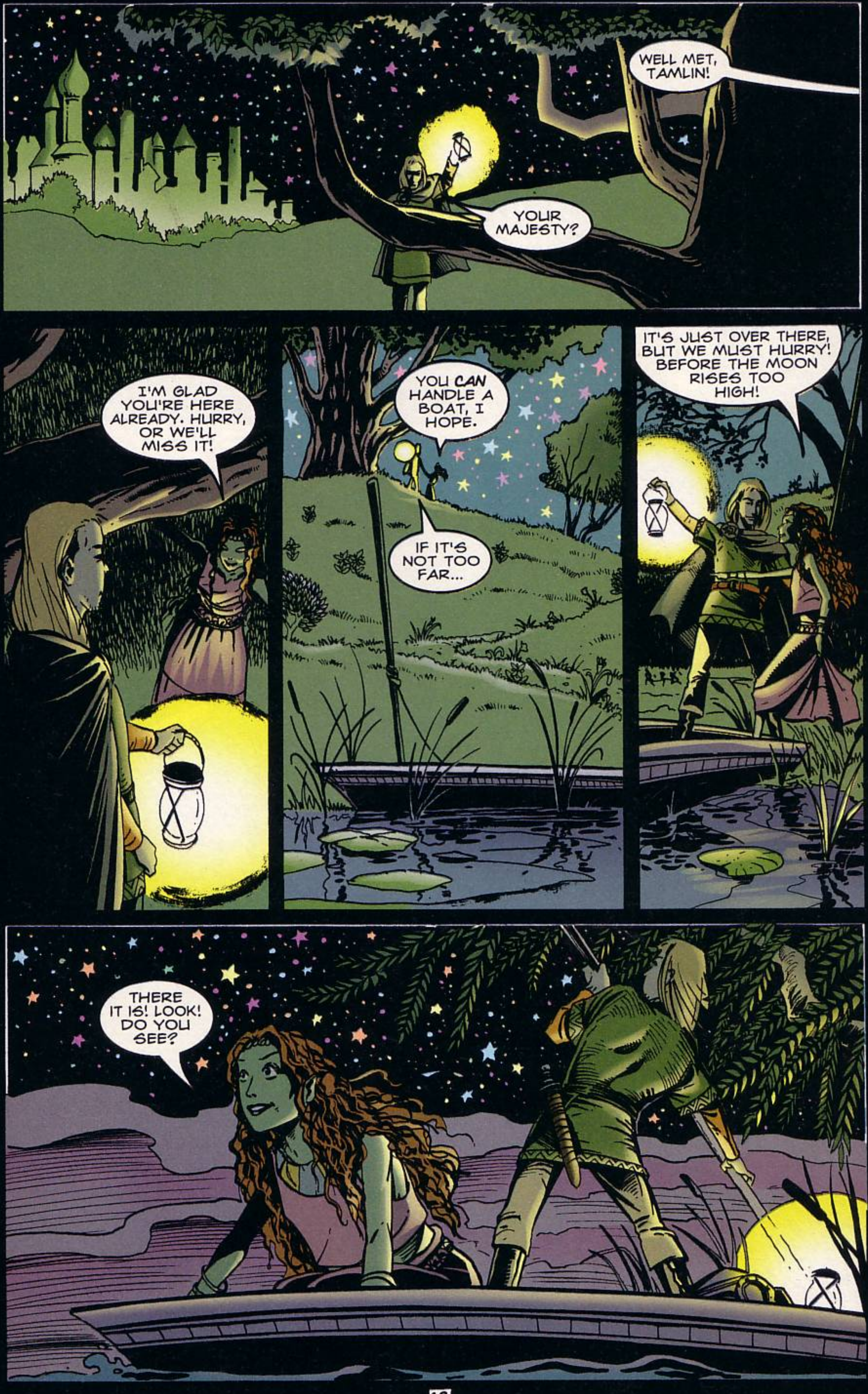

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN IN FAERIE?!
HOW MANY HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO DID YOU DIE?
I CAME HERE, AND THERE'S NO HERE LEFT! I NEED YOU, AND THERE'S NO YOU!
HOW CAN YOU BE DEAD?!
GRAN!
Oh, GRAN...
... GRAN, WHAT WILL I DO?
MY LADY... DO YOU NEED HELP?
WHO ARE YOU?
MY NAME IS TAMLIN. PLEASE DON'T BE AFRAID -- I WANT TO HELP YOU.

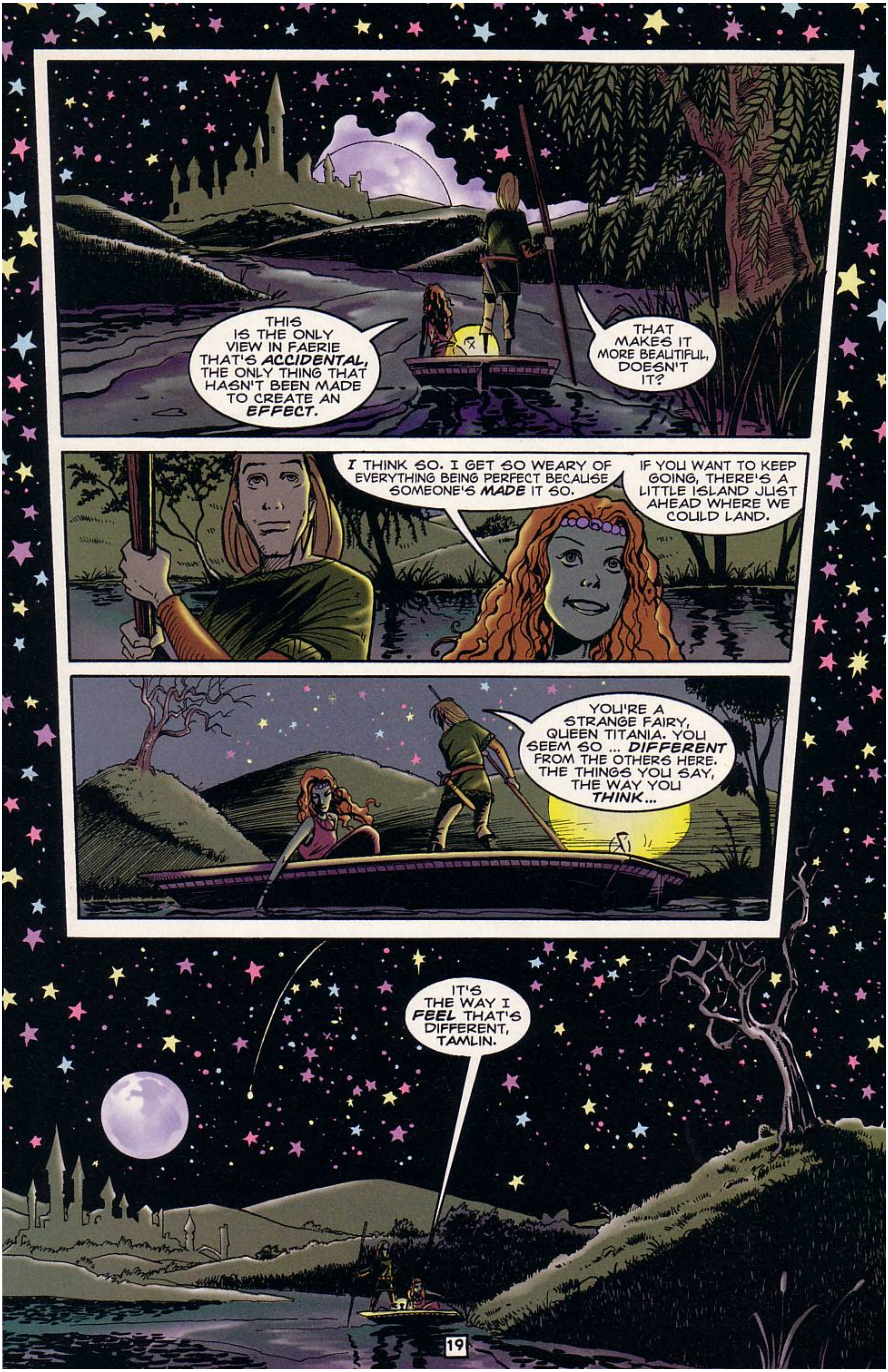

CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU?
I... I CAME HERE TO FIND HELP, BUT EVERYONE IS DEAD.
I THINK NO ONE HAS LIVED *HERE* FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS.
YOU MUST BE A STRANGER HERE -- PERHAPS YOU'VE COME TO THE WRONG PLACE.
YES... PERHAPS SO.
OR PERHAPS NOT -- IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME TO HELP YOU. ISN'T THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?
YOU'RE VERY KIND, BUT...
I THINK PERHAPS I SHOULD GO BACK NOW.
THEN AT LEAST LET ME ESCORT YOU TO WHEREVER YOU ARE STAYING. THESE WOODS ARE NO PLACE FOR A WOMAN ALONE.
YOU WISH TO ESCORT ME BACK? OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL?
OF COURSE!
COME THEN, TAMLIN. OF YOUR OWN VOLITION, COME WITH ME.
IT'S NOT VERY FAR.

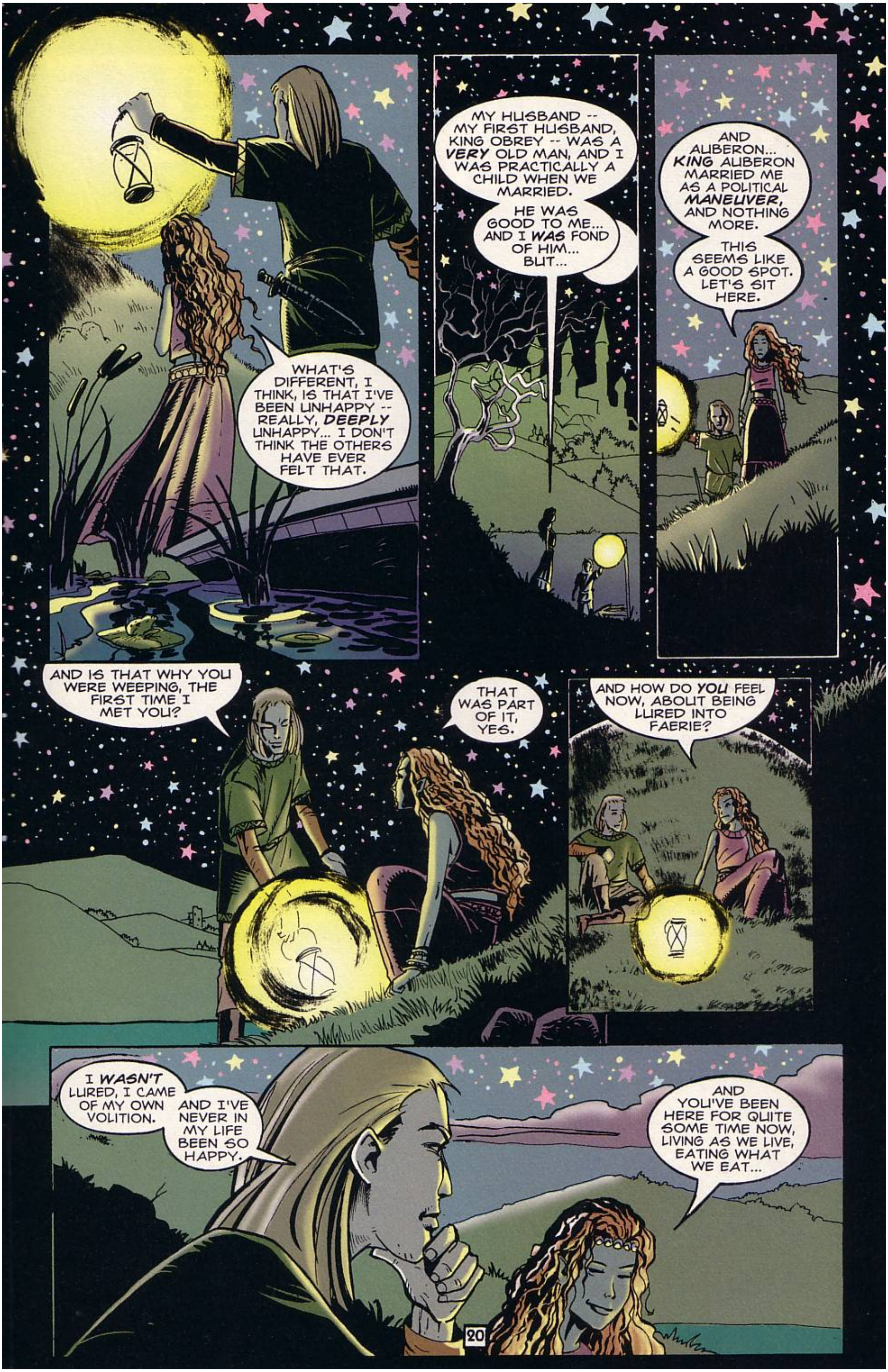

HERE WE ARE!
WHAT WITCHERY IS THIS? WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THIS PLACE HAS MANY NAMES, BUT THOSE WHO LIVE HERE CALL IT FAERIE.
FAERIE! AND FOR WHAT EVIL PURPOSE DO YOU LURE ME TO FAERIE?
I DID NOT *"LURE"* YOU, TAMLIN -- YOU ACCOMPANIED ME OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL.
THAT IS TRUE... AND, AS YOU KNOW MY NAME, WILL YOU TELL ME YOURS?
I AM CALLED TITANIA, QUEEN OF FAERIE.
QUEEN? WELL, I AM HONORED, YOUR MAJESTY. AND IS THERE A KING SOMEWHERE AS WELL?
THERE IS MY LORD HUSBAND, KING AUBERON OF FAERIE, YES.
WHAT WILL HE SAY ABOUT YOUR BRINGING HOME A STRANGER FROM A FOREIGN LAND?
I THINK HE WILL ASK WHAT SERVICE YOU MAY PERFORM TO EARN YOUR KEEP.
IN MY OWN LAND I SERVED AS MY LORD ALGER'S FALCONER. DOES YOUR FAERIE KING LIKE HUNTING?
WHY, YES HE DOES! Oh, IT'S *EXCELLENT* YOU'RE HERE!

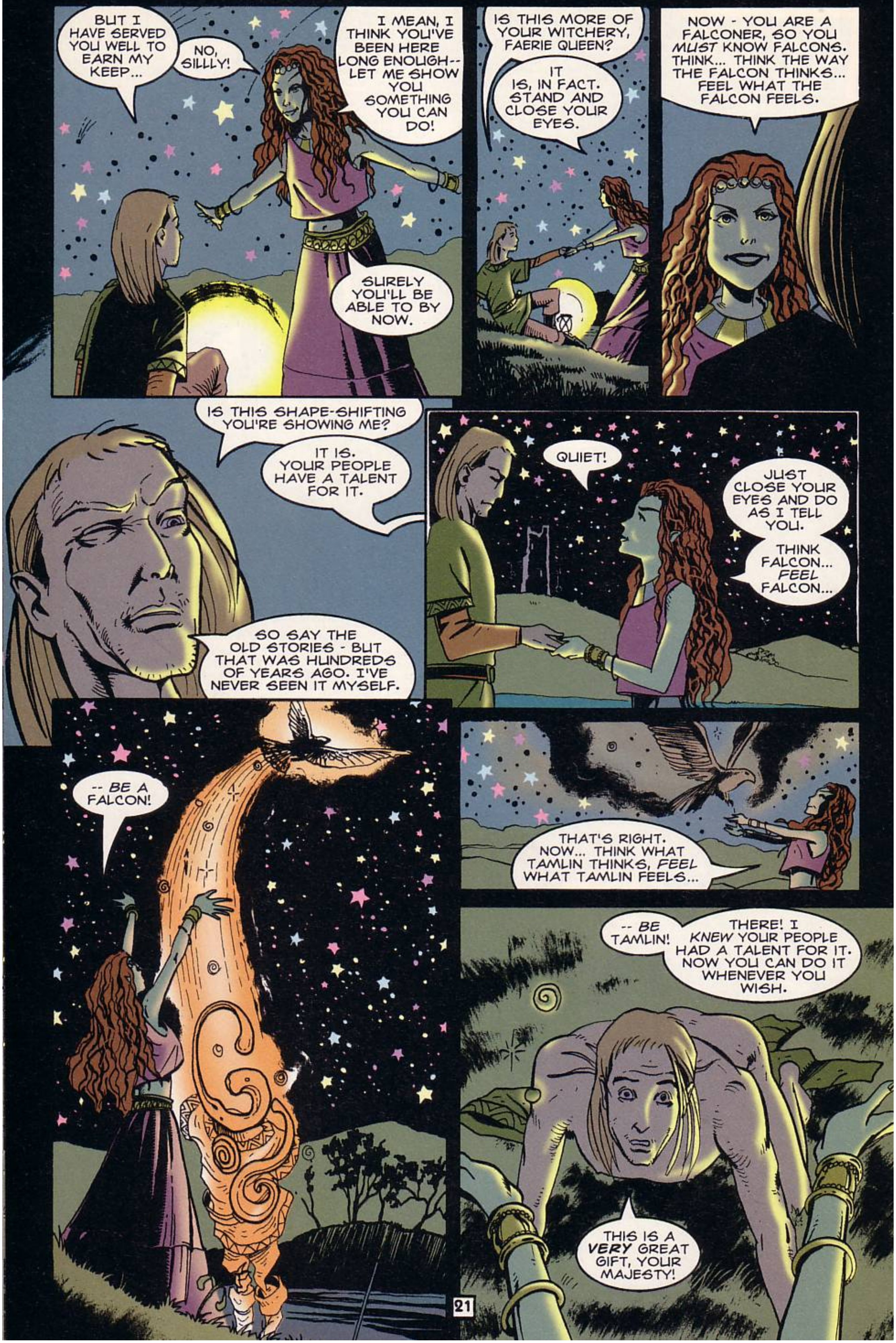

THE QUEEN HANDLES THE FALCON AS WELL AS ANY HUNTER I'VE EVER SEEN.
IT IS A TRIBUTE TO YOUR ABILITY AS A TEACHER, TAMLIN.
IT'S A PLEASURE TO TEACH SUCH APT PUPILS, YOUR MAJESTY.
BUT NOW THE AFTERNOON GROWS SHORT, AND I HAVE A PETITION TO HEAR FROM ONE OF OUR NORTHERN SUBJECTS --A TROLL, I BELIEVE. LET US RETURN TO THE PALACE.
MUST WE? CAN WE NOT STAY A BIT LONGER?
I LITTLE THOUGHT THAT I WOULD EVER SEE THE DAY MY QUEEN WOULD BEG TO STAY OUT *HUNTING*.
I NEVER REALIZED THAT HUNTING COULD BE SO... *EXCITING*.

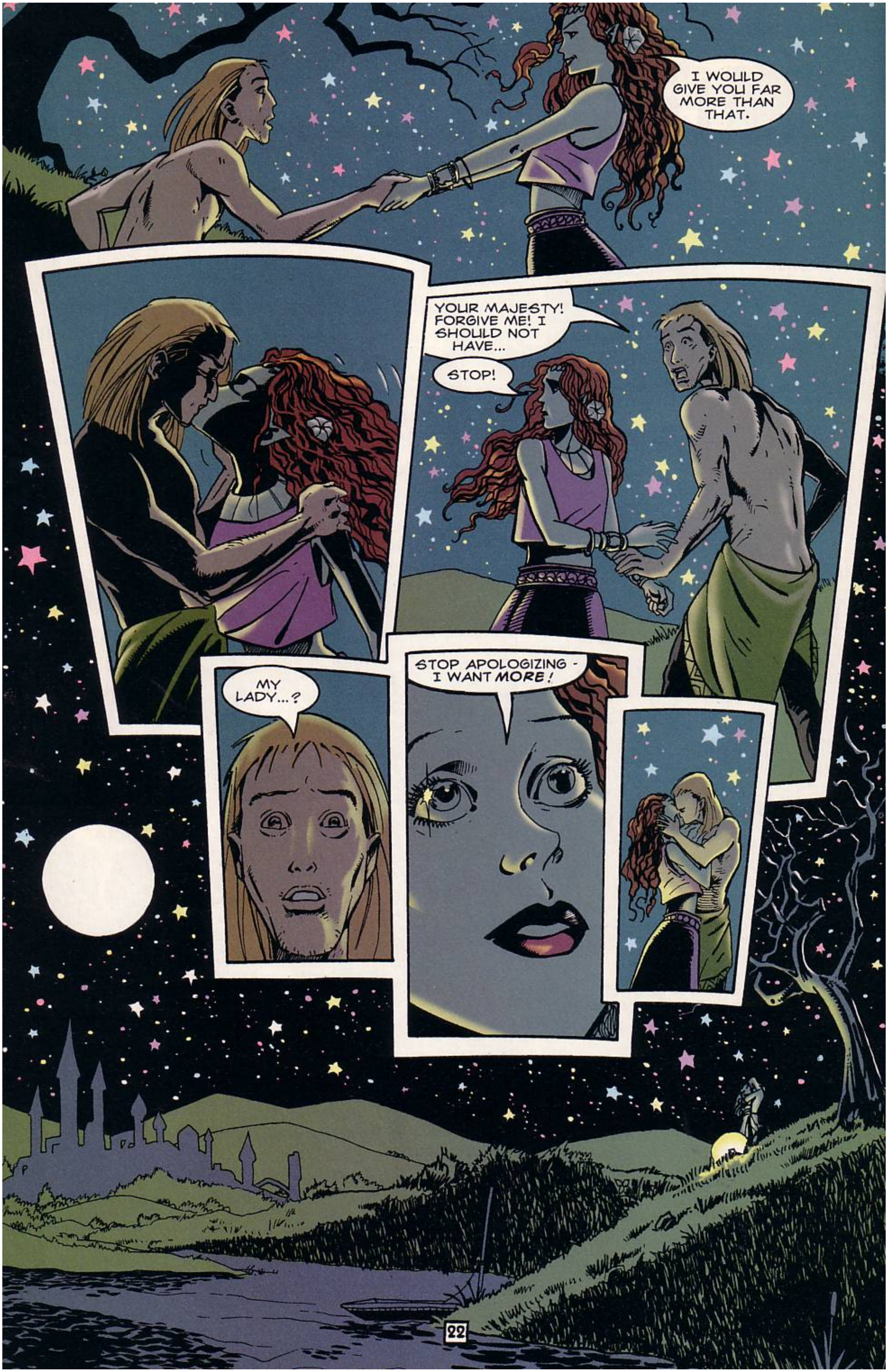

WELL, *I* MUST BE OFF, BUT I SEE NO REASON WHY *YOU* SHOULD NOT STAY --
-- IF TAMLIN DOES NOT OBJECT.
IT WOULD BE MY PLEASURE, YOUR MAJESTY.
THE KING SEEMS PLEASED WITH YOUR INTEREST IN FALCONRY.
YES -- IT'S THE FIRST COMMON INTEREST WE'VE EVER SHARED. IT'S HELPED US...
AND WHAT ARE *YOUR* INTERESTS, MY LADY? BESIDES HUNTING, I MEAN.
Oh, I KNOW SOMETHING ***WONDERFUL*** THAT I COULD SHOW YOU! WOULD YOU COME WITH ME? WILL YOU? TONIGHT?
AS YOUR MAJESTY COMMANDS.
VERY WELL, THEN. I COMMAND THAT WE SHALL MEET BENEATH THE GREAT MAGNOLIA TONIGHT JUST AFTER SUNSET.

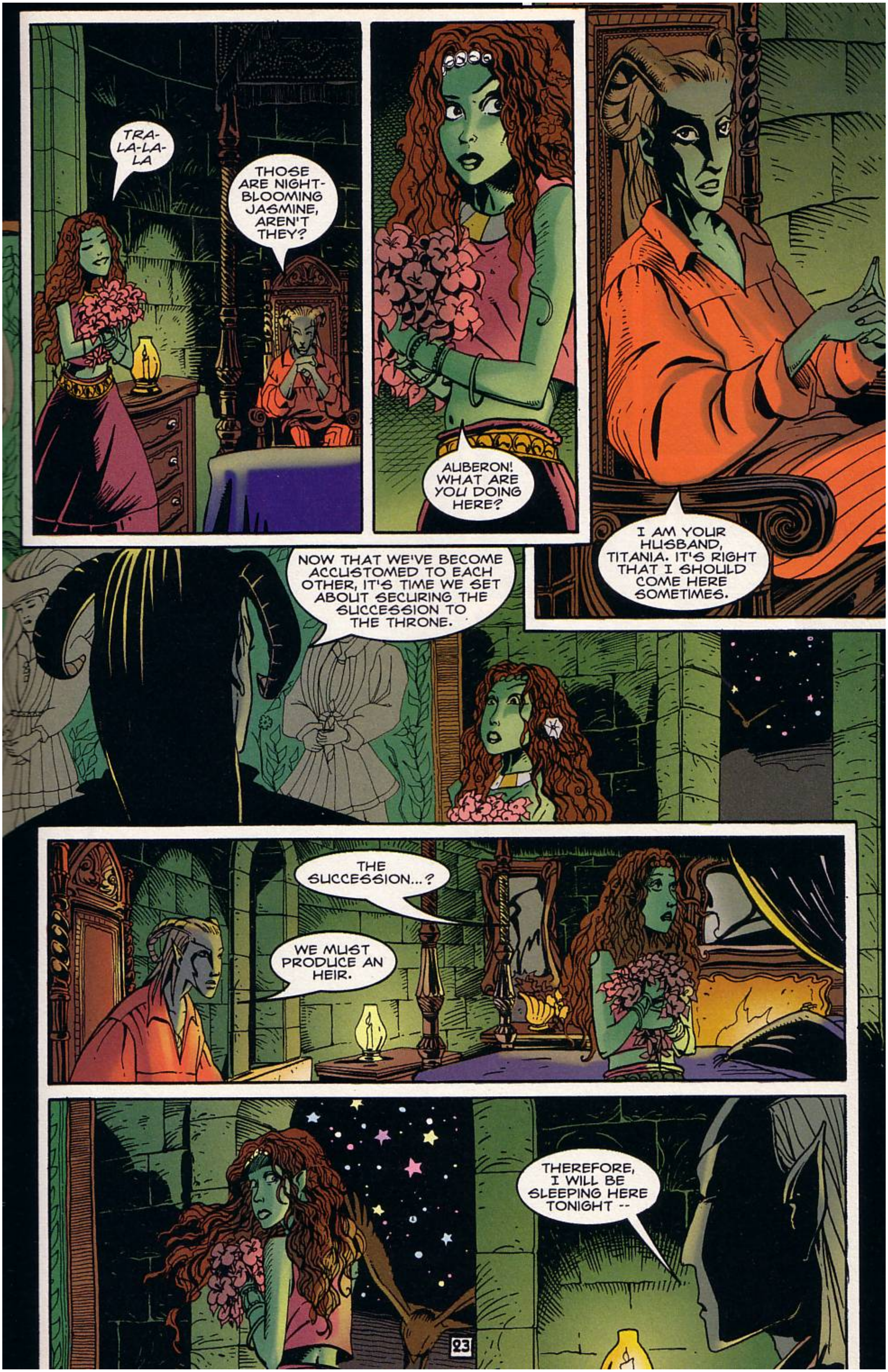

WELL MET, TAMLIN!
YOUR MAJESTY?
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE ALREADY. HURRY, OR WE'LL MISS IT!
YOU **CAN** HANDLE A BOAT, I HOPE.
IF IT'S NOT TOO FAR...
IT'S JUST OVER THERE, BUT WE MUST HURRY! BEFORE THE MOON RISES TOO HIGH!
THERE IT IS! LOOK! DO YOU SEE?

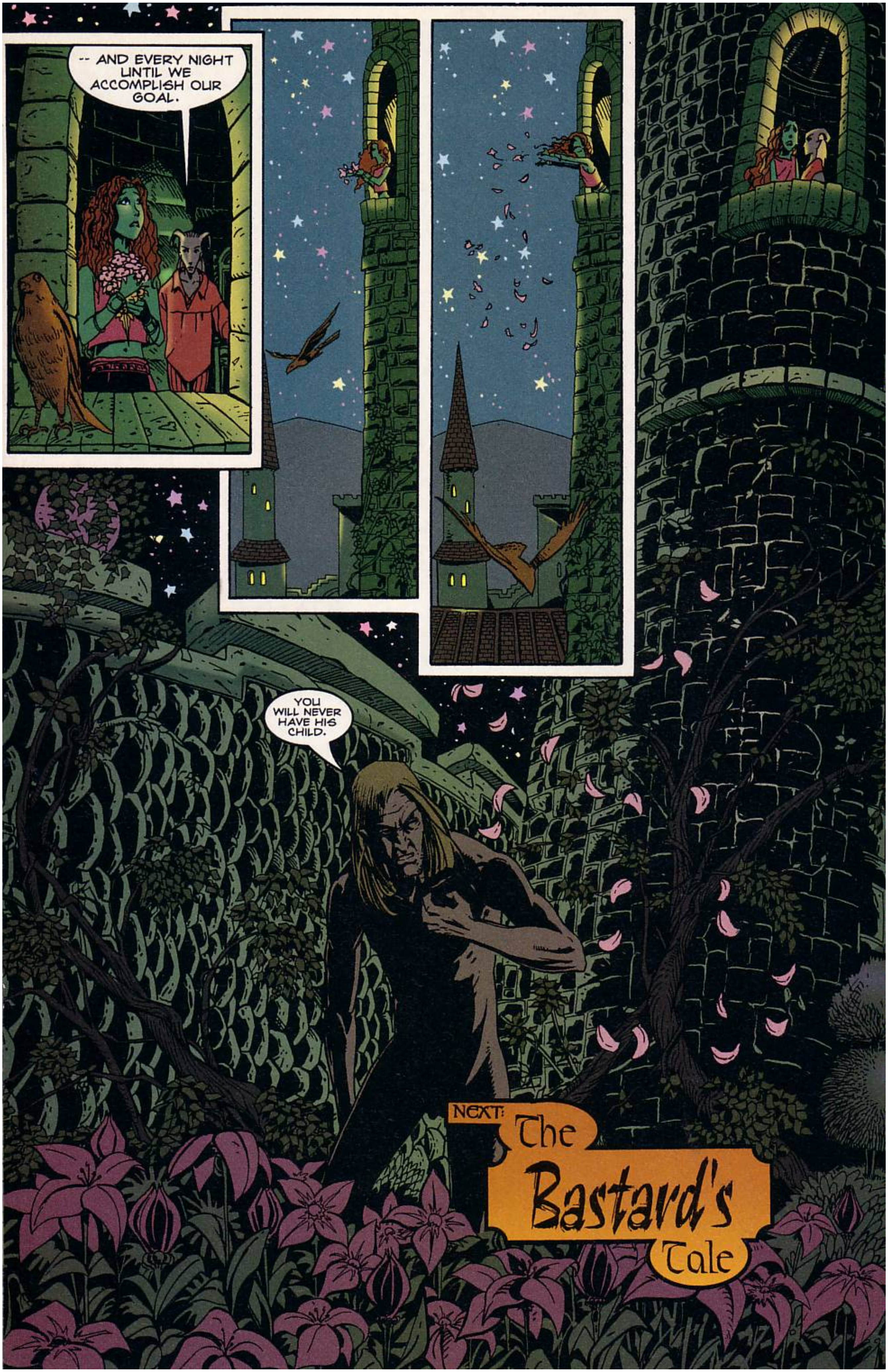

THIS IS THE ONLY VIEW IN FAERIE THAT'S *ACCIDENTAL,* THE ONLY THING THAT HASN'T BEEN MADE TO CREATE AN *EFFECT.*
THAT MAKES IT MORE BEAUTIFUL, DOESN'T IT?
I THINK SO. I GET SO WEARY OF EVERYTHING BEING PERFECT BECAUSE SOMEONE'S *MADE* IT SO.
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP GOING, THERE'S A LITTLE ISLAND JUST AHEAD WHERE WE COULD LAND.
YOU'RE A STRANGE FAIRY, QUEEN TITANIA. YOU SEEM SO ... *DIFFERENT* FROM THE OTHERS HERE. THE THINGS YOU SAY, THE WAY YOU *THINK...*
IT'S THE WAY I *FEEL* THAT'S DIFFERENT, TAMLIN.


WHAT'S DIFFERENT, I THINK, IS THAT I'VE BEEN UNHAPPY -- REALLY, **DEEPLY** UNHAPPY... I DON'T THINK THE OTHERS HAVE EVER FELT THAT.
MY HUSBAND -- MY FIRST HUSBAND, KING OBREY -- WAS A **VERY** OLD MAN, AND I WAS PRACTICALLY A CHILD WHEN WE MARRIED.
HE WAS GOOD TO ME... AND I **WAS** FOND OF HIM... BUT...
AND AUBERON... **KING** AUBERON MARRIED ME AS A POLITICAL **MANEUVER,** AND NOTHING MORE.
THIS SEEMS LIKE A GOOD SPOT. LET'S SIT HERE.
AND IS THAT WHY YOU WERE WEEPING, THE FIRST TIME I MET YOU?
THAT WAS PART OF IT, YES.
AND HOW DO **YOU** FEEL NOW, ABOUT BEING LURED INTO FAERIE?
I **WASN'T** LURED, I CAME OF MY OWN VOLITION.
AND I'VE NEVER IN MY LIFE BEEN SO HAPPY.
AND YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW, LIVING AS WE LIVE, EATING WHAT WE EAT...


BUT I HAVE SERVED YOU WELL TO EARN MY KEEP...
NO, SILLLY!
I MEAN, I THINK YOU'VE BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH-- LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING YOU CAN DO!
SURELY YOU'LL BE ABLE TO BY NOW.
IS THIS MORE OF YOUR WITCHERY, FAERIE QUEEN?
IT IS, IN FACT. STAND AND CLOSE YOUR EYES.
NOW - YOU ARE A FALCONER, SO YOU *MUST* KNOW FALCONS. THINK... THINK THE WAY THE FALCON THINKS... FEEL WHAT THE FALCON FEELS.
IS THIS SHAPE-SHIFTING YOU'RE SHOWING ME?
IT IS. YOUR PEOPLE HAVE A TALENT FOR IT.
SO SAY THE OLD STORIES - BUT THAT WAS HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. I'VE NEVER SEEN IT MYSELF.
QUIET!
JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES AND DO AS I TELL YOU.
THINK FALCON... *FEEL* FALCON...
-- *BE A FALCON!*
THAT'S RIGHT. NOW... THINK WHAT TAMLIN THINKS, *FEEL* WHAT TAMLIN FEELS...
-- *BE* TAMLIN!
THERE! I *KNEW* YOUR PEOPLE HAD A TALENT FOR IT. NOW YOU CAN DO IT WHENEVER YOU WISH.
THIS IS A ***VERY*** GREAT GIFT, YOUR MAJESTY!


I WOULD GIVE YOU FAR MORE THAN THAT.
YOUR MAJESTY! FORGIVE ME! I SHOULD NOT HAVE...
STOP!
MY LADY...?
STOP APOLOGIZING - I WANT *MORE*!


TRA-LA-LA-LA
THOSE ARE NIGHT-BLOOMING JASMINE, AREN'T THEY?
AUBERON! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I AM YOUR HUSBAND, TITANIA. IT'S RIGHT THAT I SHOULD COME HERE SOMETIMES.
NOW THAT WE'VE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO EACH OTHER, IT'S TIME WE SET ABOUT SECURING THE SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE.
THE SUCCESSION...?
WE MUST PRODUCE AN HEIR.
THEREFORE, I WILL BE SLEEPING HERE TONIGHT --


-- AND EVERY NIGHT UNTIL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOAL.
YOU WILL NEVER HAVE HIS CHILD.
NEXT: The Bastard's Tale

THE BOOKS OF FAERIE

COVER ART:
HERMANN MEJIA

LOGO DESIGN:
TIMOTHY ZACH

Well, since issue one of BOOKS OF FAERIE still hasn't hit the stands, and having devoted the first issue's text page to an interview with Bronwyn Carlton, I thought we'd spend this text page talking with Peter Gross, who's the artist on this series, as well as one of the regular artists on BOOKS OF MAGIC. So, jumping right in to our conversation:

—Julie Rottenberg

JR: Peter, what brought you into the world of comics to begin with?

PG: That's actually how I learned to draw: by reading comics. And that's what got me excited about drawing in the first place. I started drawing comics as a little kid — when I was 6 or 7 years old — just copying stuff, mostly super-heroes and MAD magazine stuff. And then I dropped out of high school, which I hated so much I refused to go back, and ended up going to this alternative *Billy Jack*-esque school. It was this hippie school in the early '70s that was meant either for hippies who didn't want to send their kids to real schools or for kids who were one step from total dropouts —

JR: And which category did you fit into?

PG: Both! I went there for a year, trying to pay for it by selling paintings.

JR: You were selling your paintings at that age?

PG: Well, I would sell the occasional one, and not for very much money. Then after a year at the alternative school, I was really cocky and went back to my old local high school to take two art classes — an art history class and a drawing class. And then I took my college entrance exam and did okay.

JR: You'd dropped out of high school, but you wanted to go to college?

PG: Sure, I wasn't opposed to education, I was only opposed to this authoritarian high school. So I went to St. John's in Minnesota, a year early. It was a liberal arts school, and I was majoring in art. At that point I wasn't doing anything with comics; I was a total fine arts-head. I did a lot of art history, a lot of painting, a lot of printmaking, and liberal arts. I got a lot of incompletes, too. I tended not to finish my final papers — I guess I was a born freelancer. Then I got accepted into grad school before I finished college. I went to the University of Wisconsin in Superior, for a master's degree in fine arts.

JR: Did you always know you wanted to be an artist?

PG: Yup. And I always thought I'd do comics some time on the side, just for fun. I was still reading comics all this time, pretty regularly.

JR: What were you reading back then?

PG: At that time, it was all super-hero stuff. THE DARK KNIGHT came out right after I got out of college, and that's when things in comics really started changing. And now and then I'd sit down and draw a few comics things, over the summer.

JR: So did you finally finish grad school?

PG: Actually, right before my senior show, I tore my ankle up playing racketball. So I didn't finish my show, and then they found out I didn't even have my undergrad degree, so they wouldn't give me my master's degree. So technically, I don't have my high school, undergrad, or grad degree. And now I'm teaching comic art at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. How ironic...

JR: And when are *they* going to find out the truth?

PG: They just asked me where I went to school, they never asked if I had any degrees. So after I got out of grad school, comic artists were starting to get royalties and being treated a little better than they had been, and the field was a little more creatively interesting and enticing, so I decided to get into it. So I started doing samples — just taking things down to the Chicago convention every year, but I couldn't get anywhere. I got some good feedback — Frank Miller introduced me to Jim Shooter and Mike Gold, and they gave me good feedback, but I still didn't get any jobs.

JR: How were you surviving?

PG: I was supporting myself by doing advertising work a little, and working part-time at a comic shop — and I was living in Duluth, which was the cheapest place in the country to live. And I would sell an occasional painting. So then the black and white boom with *Turtles* happened, and I started putting together *Empire Lanes*, which featured what was roughly a Dungeon and Dragons/Lord of the Rings kind of group. They fall into a magical hole and fall out into a bowling alley in the south side of Chicago. I was writing and drawing it, and self-published it — to tremendous acclaim (and minor sales). I had tried to sell it to the big companies but they all said it wasn't commercial enough. But after I'd published it, most of those companies contacted me saying they wanted to publish it. It was just that it wasn't exactly like something they were already publishing at the time. Then the market started crashing, but Comico did publish it, finally, and Shelly Roeberg was the editor.

JR: So, how'd you break in to DC Comics?

PG: At one of the Chicago conventions, Karen Berger approached me and took me out to lunch and asked if I wanted to do anything for DC.

JR: Based on work she'd seen of yours for other people?

PG: Based on *Empire Lanes*. At the time, I was still doing *Empire Lanes*, and had put together a proposal for *The Silent Knight*. This was a story I'd been putting together for four years already, but I was originally thinking about it with the Black Knight at Marvel. But then I realized that DC had pretty much the identical old character floating around, so decided it could work with DC. I'd originally wanted to make it very DC-accessible, very superhero, but it was really about Fairies and why they left Earth. And I kept trying to pitch it as a superhero (this was before VERTIGO had started) and eventually Karen said she got the feeling I wasn't telling the story the way I wanted to, which was true. Then Comico went out of business, and I started working for DC. I inked SWAMP THING, MISTER MIRACLE, and then DR. FATE for Stuart. But then the guy who was drawing it hated my inks and quit and Stuart gave the book to me — at least, that's the way I heard the story!

JR: And what ever happened with *Empire Lanes*?

PG: DC came close to doing it, but it never happened. I got the feeling it was a little too cute. At the time, there wasn't really anything lighthearted at VERTIGO, although now with BOOKS OF MAGIC, that's not true. DR. FATE ended and I did some more inking to make ends meet, but I was basically unemployed. When Shelly came to work at DC, she gave me a SHADE fill-in to do, because we'd worked together when Shelly was at Comico. They saw that at Marvel, and they hired me to do *Hellstorm* — and that's another case where I was hired to be the inker and ended up being the penciller because the guy was too slow.

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I did that for a while, and then Stuart hired me to do the ARCANA annual, with John Ney Rieber as writer. I continued working for Marvel, so I wasn't available to work on the BOOKS OF MAGIC series. And anyway, I thought it was going to bomb, so I stayed at Marvel, because they were selling a lot of books.

JR: Why did you think BOOKS OF MAGIC would bomb?

PG: I thought all of Neil's fans would hate it because Neil wasn't writing it, and they had gotten this new guy to write the series. I figured he'd get crushed.

JR: The truth comes out... So how did you get from being practically unemployed to having an entire studio with several assistants working for you?

PG: Around the ARCANA Annual, I was also working on *Hellstorm*, so for that period I was doing the equivalent of two books a month, pencilling and inking. I think once I did an issue of *Hellstorm* in fourteen days and that's when I hired the extra help. I had two or three people helping me out, doing backgrounds and paste-up. And that's when I bought a photocopier. That's what made me fast: photocopying things.

JR: So, that's your secret! But how'd you end up back with us?

PG: Stuart called me up about the first issue of BOOKS OF MAGIC, asking me to reink it, and I thought I could easily handle inking in addition to *Hellstorm*. But by the third issue of BOM, it was clear that Gary [Amaro] couldn't keep up, so I was helping pencil and ink that — all while *Hellstorm* had gotten cancelled and I had started to work on *Dr. Strange*. Then, when *Dr. Strange* got cancelled, I did *The Mask* over at Dark Horse. And I had already agreed to help you out on BOM if Gary needed it, and of course, just as I'd agreed to do *The Mask*, you called me up and asked me to do more BOM! And I wanted to do it all, and I had so much on my plate — but it was good for me. I think my name was out there a lot, so there was this perception that I was really good, and I've been coasting on that for the past year. At one point I was doing *The Mask*, *Dr. Strange*, and BOM all at the same time.

JR: What was it like working more closely with John?

PG: I prefer working with full scripts, and with John's stuff, it's like reading a short story. They're great. You get the real spirit of the thing. I would wonder, why does this poor guy put so much into the script that's not going to be in the book?

JR: How much contact were you in with John?

PG: We were talking pretty regularly when I started pencilling, and I would talk to Gary, too, when I was inking him.

JR: What's it like now, to be working on BOOKS OF FAERIE, after doing BOOKS OF MAGIC for so long?

PG: It's eerily the same but strangely different, because I'm working with the same characters, but in a very different context. In the first issue, when I was drawing that first scene, I realized that outside of Neil and John, Bronwyn's probably the first person to write a Tim scene. And John's the *only* one who's written a Molly scene.

JR: What's it like working with a new writer?

PG: Bronwyn's been a joy to work with. What Bronwyn is so good at is giving us an unexpected side to the characters. And you know we thought we were going to hate BOOKS OF FAERIE. We wanted to hate it!

JR: Because you felt territorial about the characters?

PG: Yeah, and we had our own plans for them, although it was taking us forever to get that proposal together for you. And it's so ironic that I'm back on fairies, when this is what I wanted to be doing eight years ago.

JR: See, you were ahead of your time; you must have been on to the fact that Fairies were going to be hot.

PG: Yeah, if only anyone had listened...

JR: Is there a favorite character of yours?

PG: In all of comicdom, you gotta love Molly. What I like doing on BOM are all of the side characters that John comes up with, especially when you don't know that they're going to be important later.

JR: And do you ever miss drawing super-heroes?

PG: I always get a thrill when I get to draw a super-hero, because it goes back to the childhood thing — when I first knew I wanted to do comics. It was fun to do the Hulk, for example.

JR: But would you say that your real calling is more of the material you're doing now?

PG: Well, my real calling is character-driven stories. And I think it's fair to say that most character-driven stories are not super-hero. But I would do a super-hero story that's character-driven, if it came along.

JR: When are you ever going to write again?

PG: Well, I'm hoping BOOKS OF FAERIE is going to be popular enough that I'll be able to do a story for that some time. And then, of course, that will be so popular, I'll get to do *Empire Lanes* again!

JR: So that's what it all comes back to; that's all you really want to do?

PG: Well, it was a really strong story, and I'd love to get back to it some time. And I'd like to do a Dr. Fate story, with him in the 1930's. My ultimate goal is to be writing my own stuff again, but I've been lucky enough to work with such great writers that I feel like I'm still learning a lot from working with other people. So I keep saying I'll just wait another year. And I almost feel like I'm already booked up for the next few years. I'd love to draw a long, epic story for BOM — that would be fun.

JR: So even after doing so many issues of BOM, you don't get sick of the characters?

PG: No, there are so many of them! John and I were coming up with T-shirt ideas, and I came up with about 40 different characters that would be intriguing and great to put on a T-shirt. I can't even come up with 40 characters from BATMAN, which has been going on for more than 50 years!

JR: And what about the fact that you and John are now living under the same roof?

PG: Yes, the rumor is true that I am now John's landlord, for the time being. He hardly ever comes up to my studio, though; he's busy typing away on the lower level. I think it'll be fun when we're both working on BOM together again, to be able to work so closely.

My thanks to Peter Gross, for taking time out of his very busy schedule to talk with me. He's made a point of saying that given Titania's impending pregnancy, he feels he should be able to take nine months to draw this... Keep your eye on this space next issue, by which time we should have some letters in on BOOKS OF FAERIE #1. And speaking of next issue:

VERTIGO

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FAERIE
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NEXT: The shattering conclusion! At last, Queen Titania is pregnant and all of Faerie waits on pins and needles for her delivery. But only the Amadan and the mysterious midwife Bridey will be present to learn the shocking secret that will alter Titania and the future of Faerie forever. Join us in the delivery room, one month from now, with Bronwyn, Peter, Gloria, Richard, and me, breathing deeply... in...out...in...

—Julie

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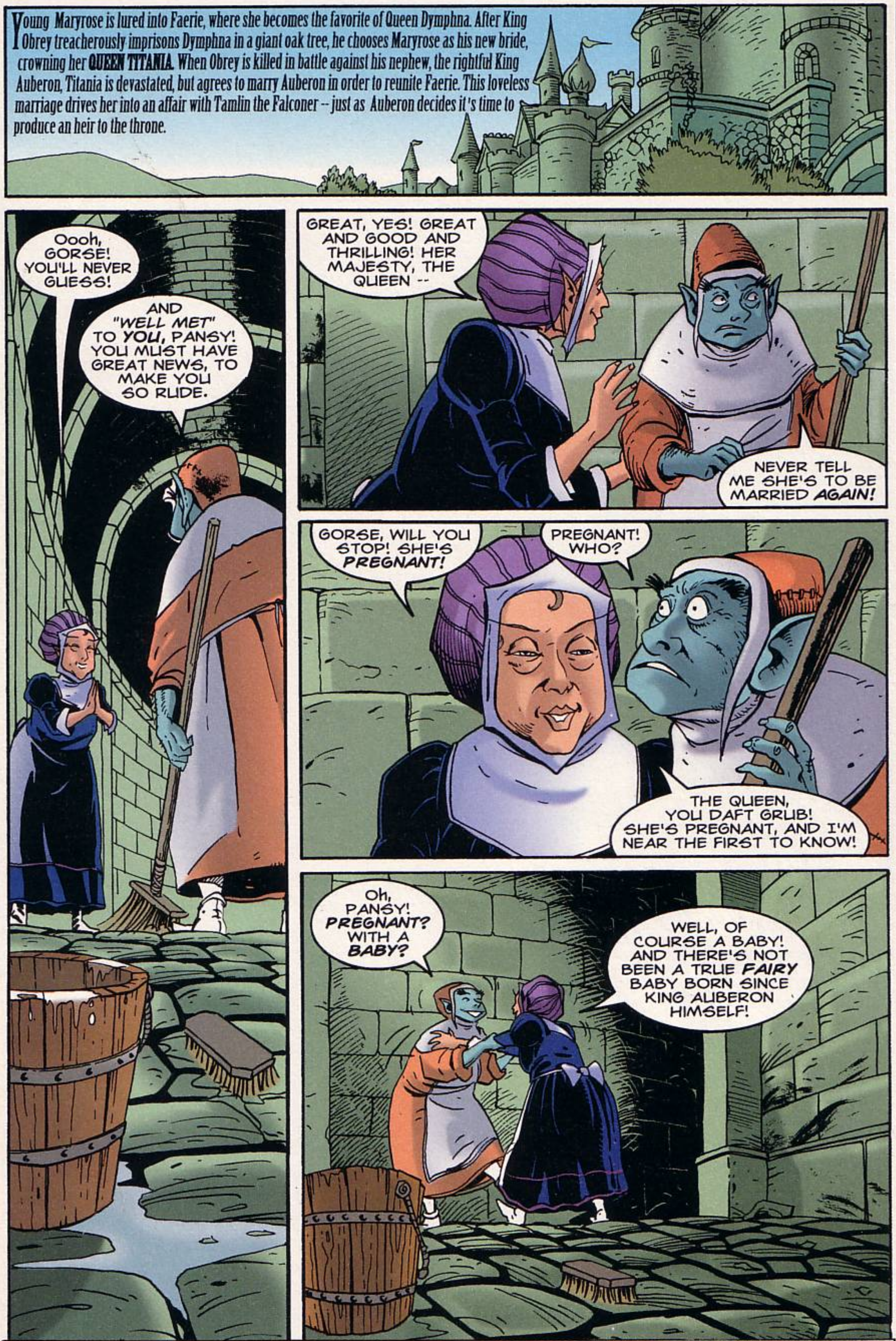
Oooh, GORSE! YOU'LL NEVER GUESS!
AND "WELL MET" TO *YOU*, PANSY! YOU MUST HAVE GREAT NEWS, TO MAKE YOU SO RUDE.
GREAT, YES! GREAT AND GOOD AND THRILLING! HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN --
NEVER TELL ME SHE'S TO BE MARRIED *AGAIN!*
GORSE, WILL YOU STOP! SHE'S *PREGNANT!*
PREGNANT! WHO?
THE QUEEN, YOU DAFT GRUB! SHE'S PREGNANT, AND I'M NEAR THE FIRST TO KNOW!
Oh, PANSY! *PREGNANT?* WITH A *BABY?*
WELL, OF COURSE A BABY! AND THERE'S NOT BEEN A TRUE *FAIRY* BABY BORN SINCE KING AUBERON HIMSELF!

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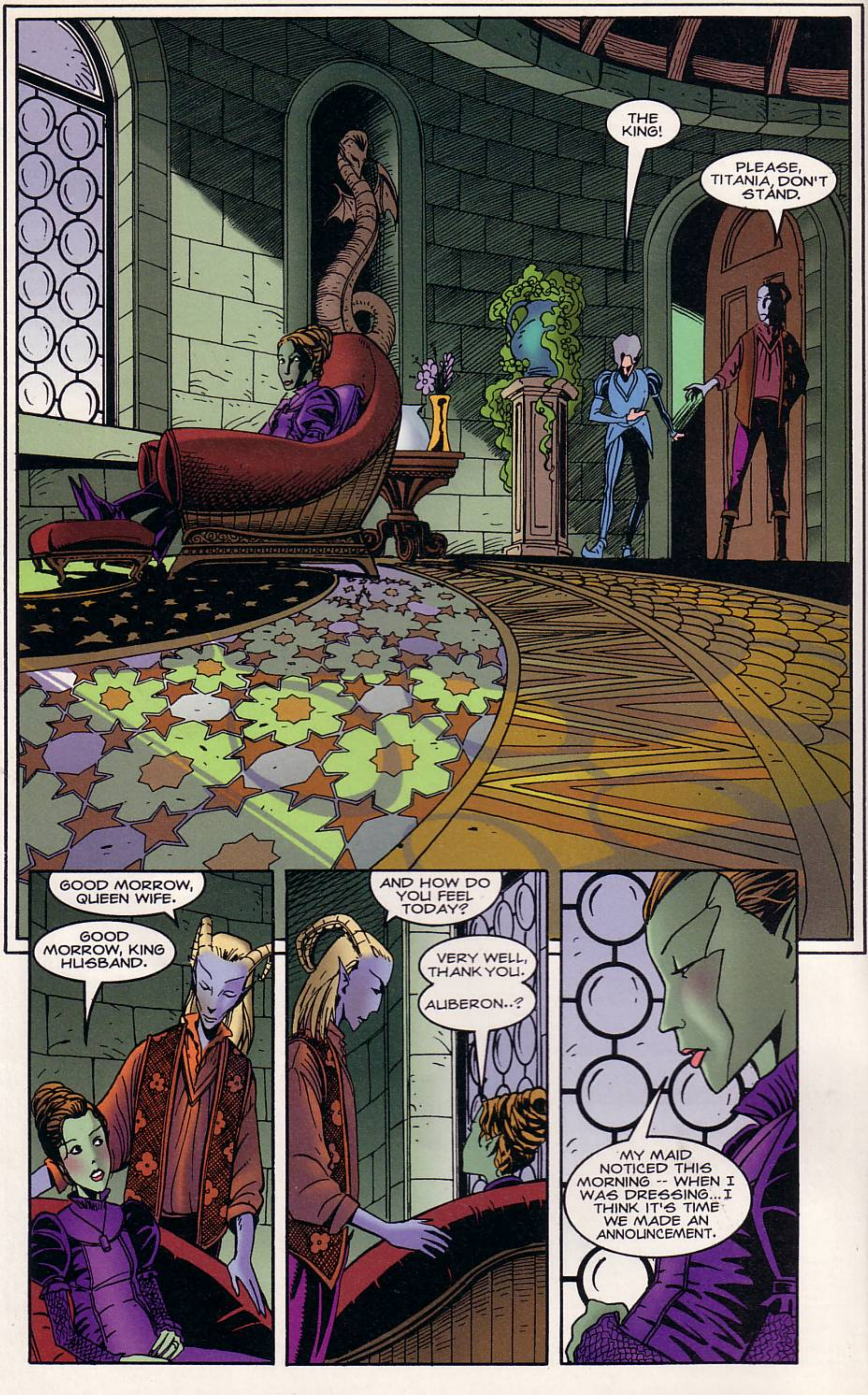
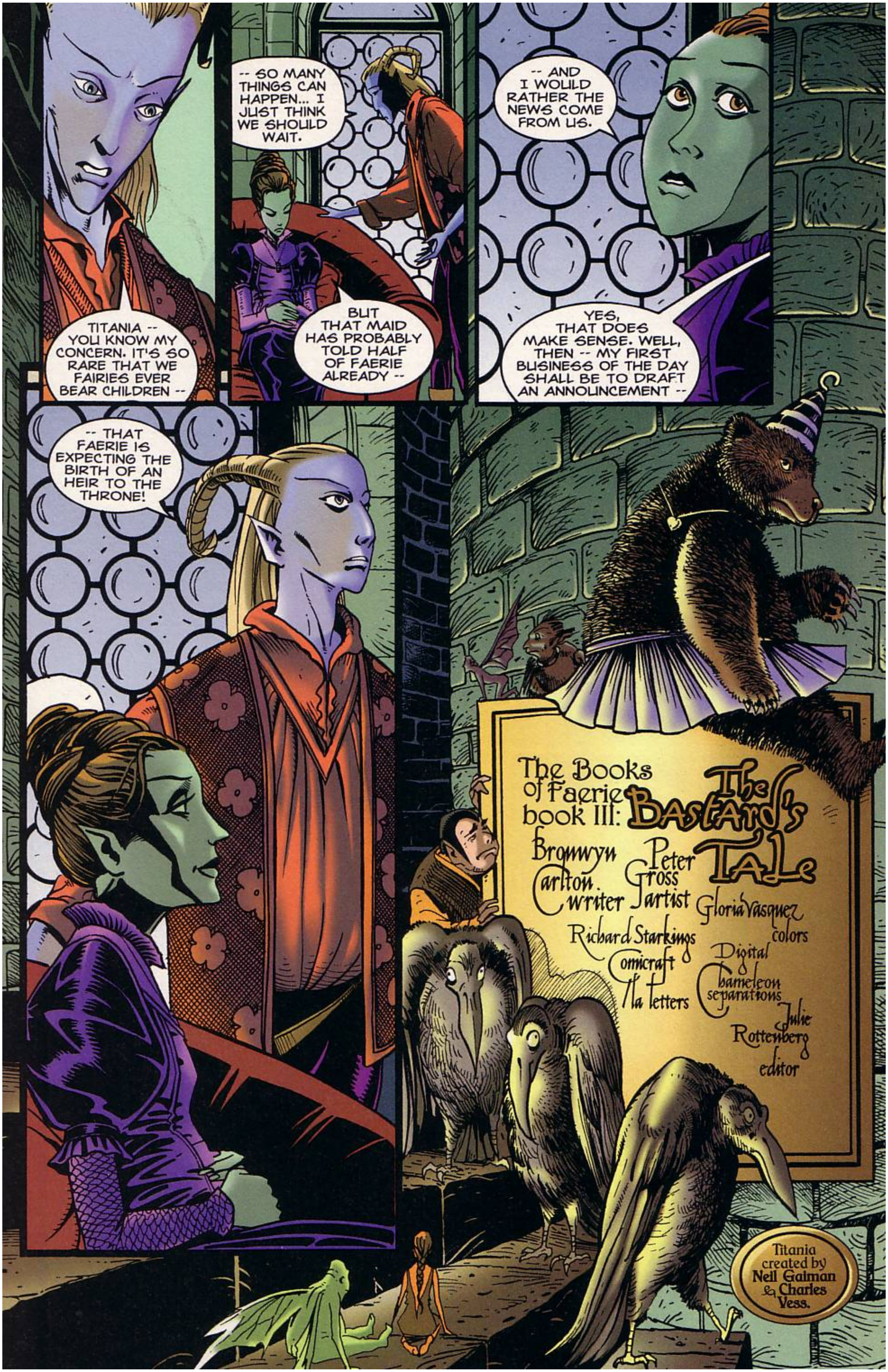
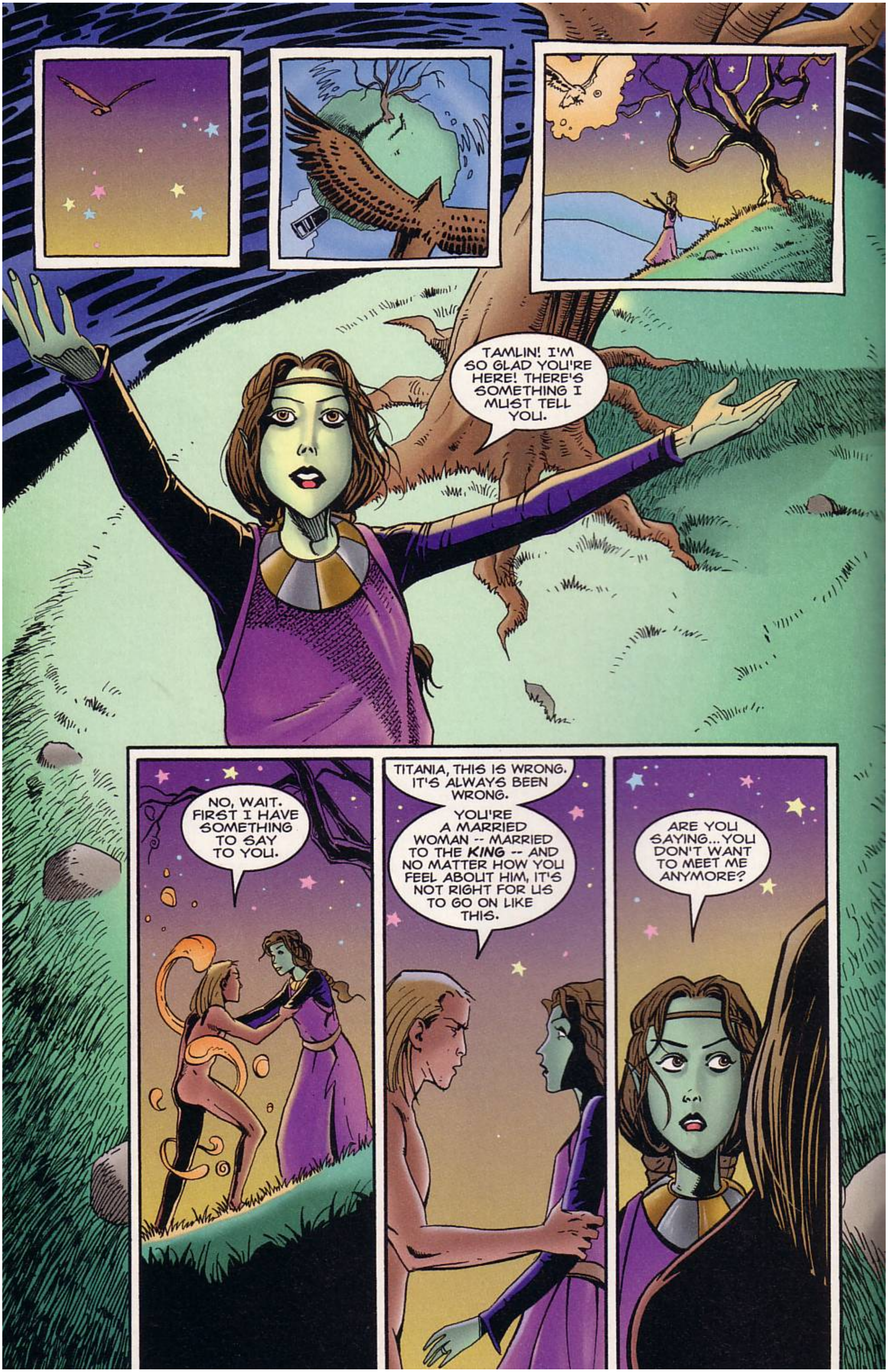
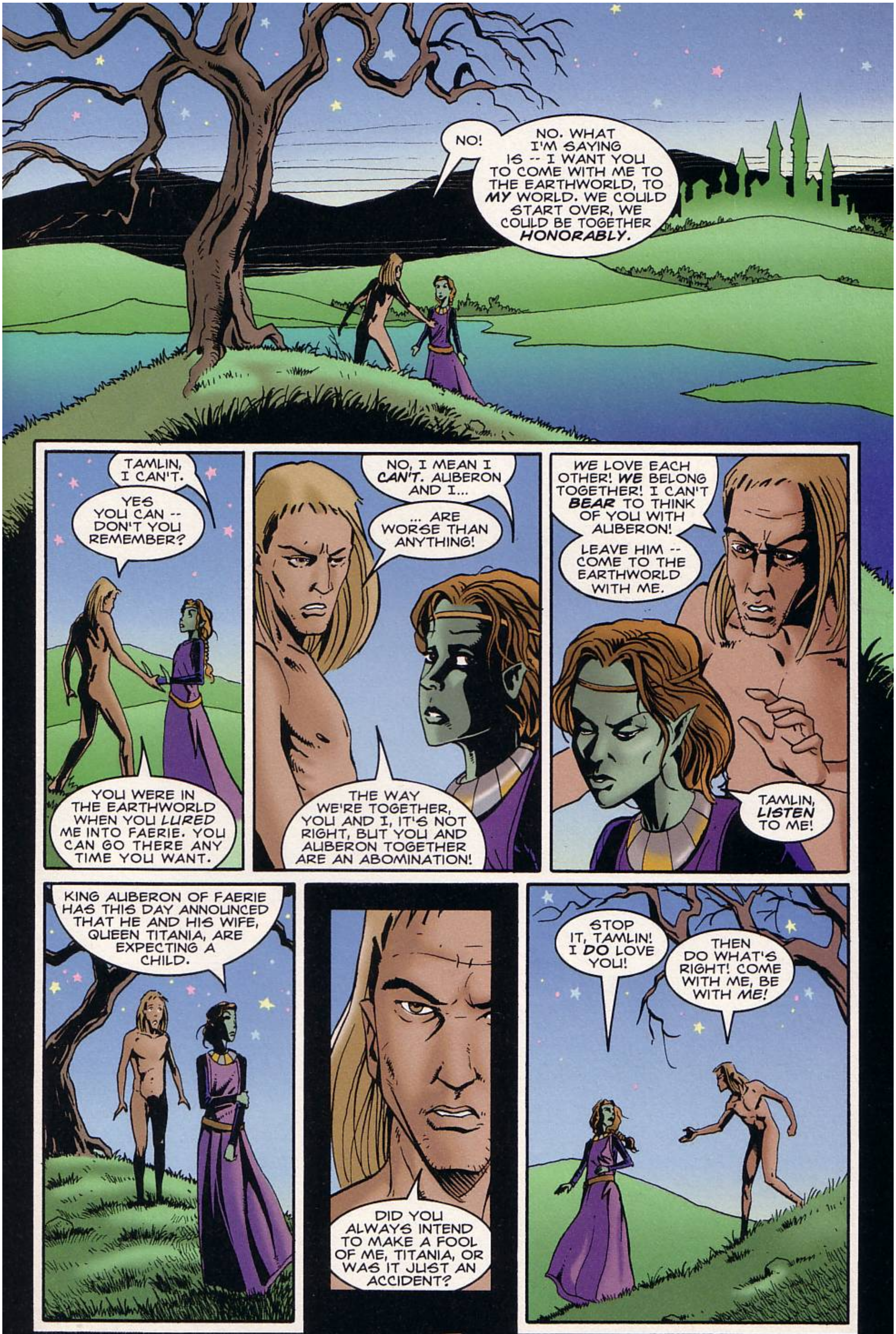
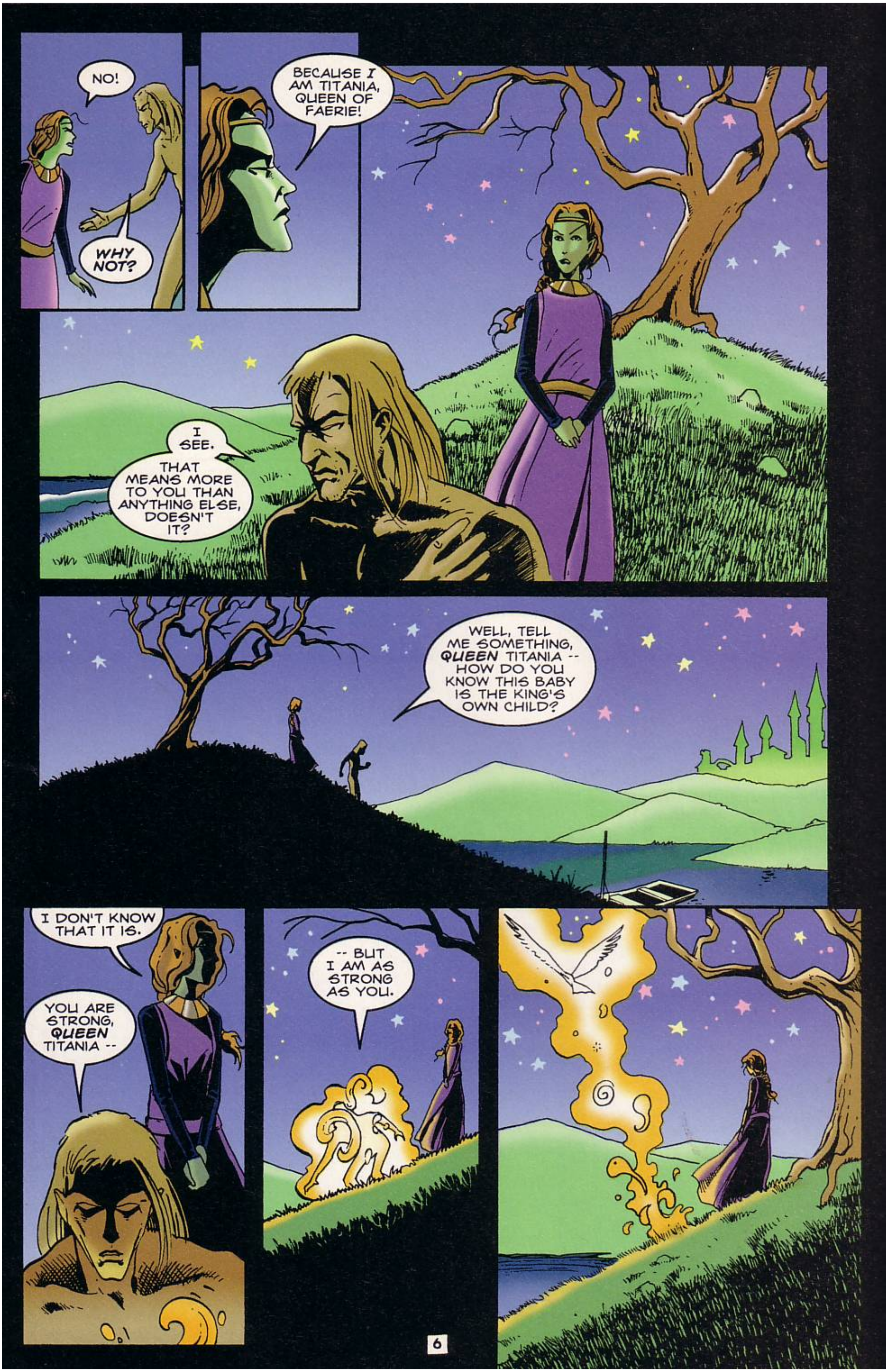
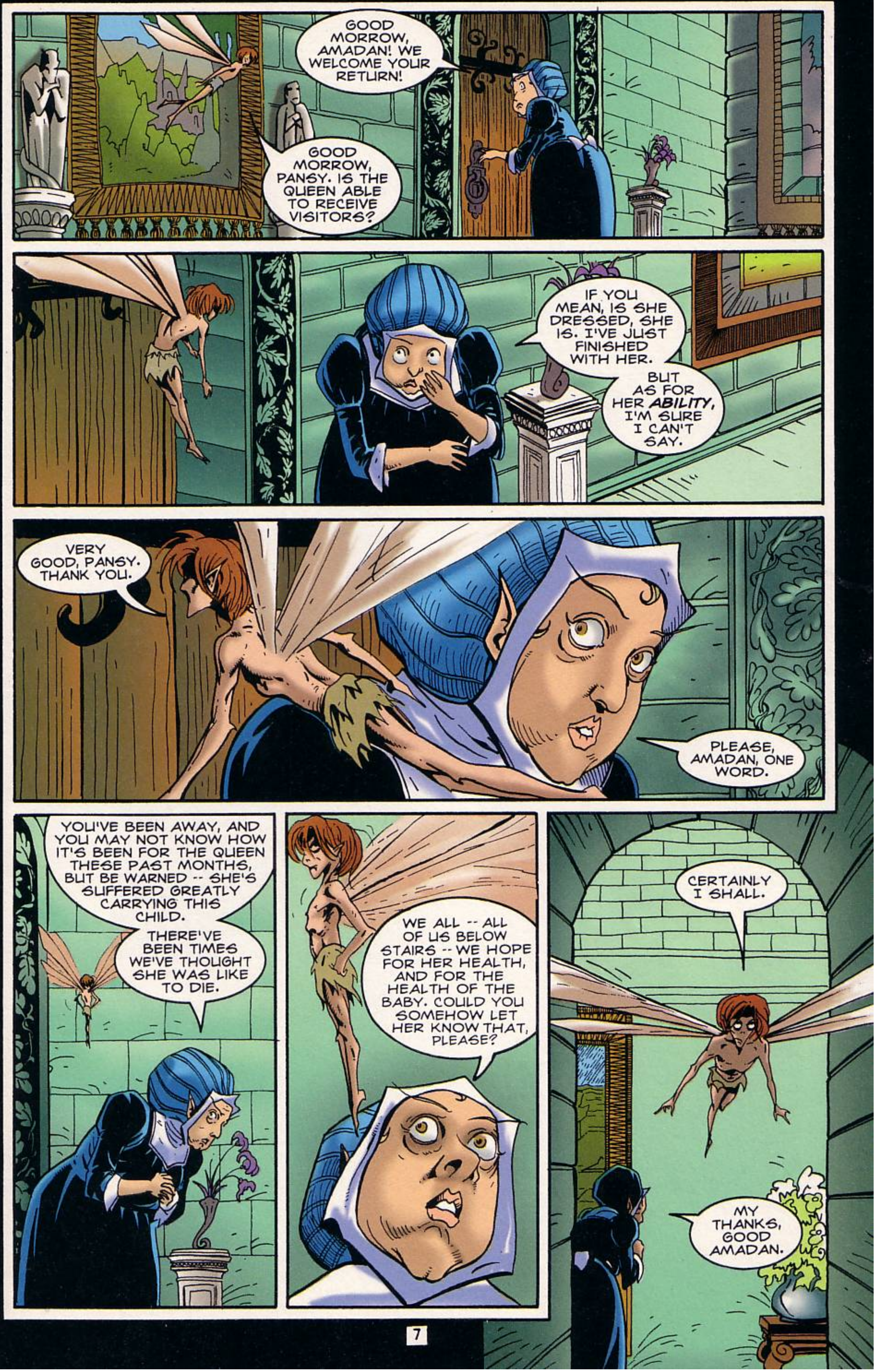

THE KING!
PLEASE, TITANIA, DON'T STAND.
GOOD MORROW, QUEEN WIFE.
GOOD MORROW, KING HUSBAND.
AND HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?
VERY WELL, THANK YOU.
AUBERON..?
MY MAID NOTICED THIS MORNING -- WHEN I WAS DRESSING... I THINK IT'S TIME WE MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

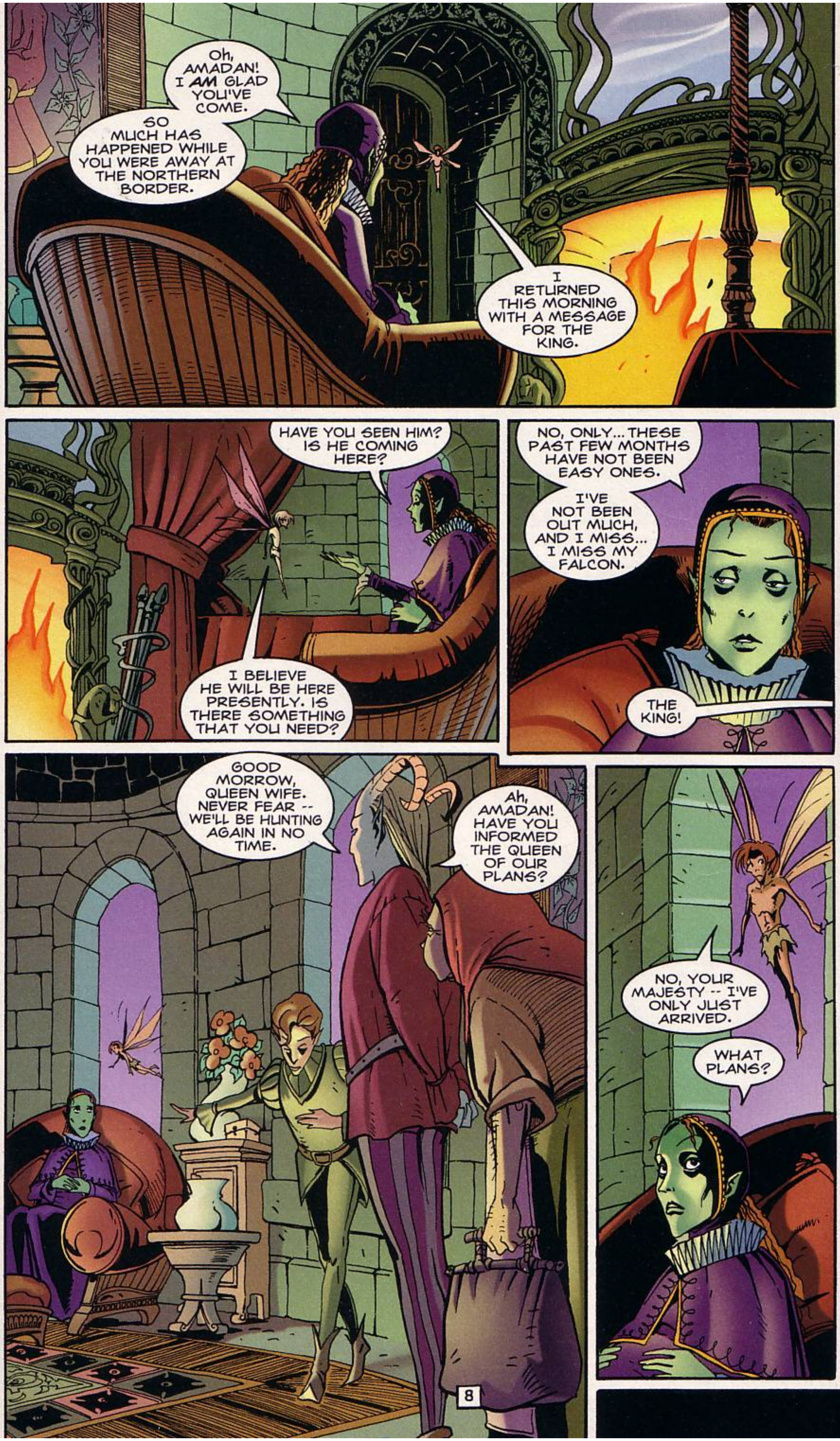

TITANIA -- YOU KNOW MY CONCERN. IT'S SO RARE THAT WE FAIRIES EVER BEAR CHILDREN --
-- SO MANY THINGS CAN HAPPEN... I JUST THINK WE SHOULD WAIT.
BUT THAT MAID HAS PROBABLY TOLD HALF OF FAERIE ALREADY --
-- AND I WOULD RATHER THE NEWS COME FROM US.
YES, THAT DOES MAKE SENSE. WELL, THEN -- MY FIRST BUSINESS OF THE DAY SHALL BE TO DRAFT AN ANNOUNCEMENT --
-- THAT FAERIE IS EXPECTING THE BIRTH OF AN HEIR TO THE THRONE!
The Books of Faerie book III: The Bastard's TALe
Bronwyn Carlton writer
Peter Gross artist
Gloria Vasquez colors
Richard Starkings Comicraft /la letters
Digital Chameleon separations
Julie Rottenberg editor
Titania created by Neil Gaiman & Charles Vess.

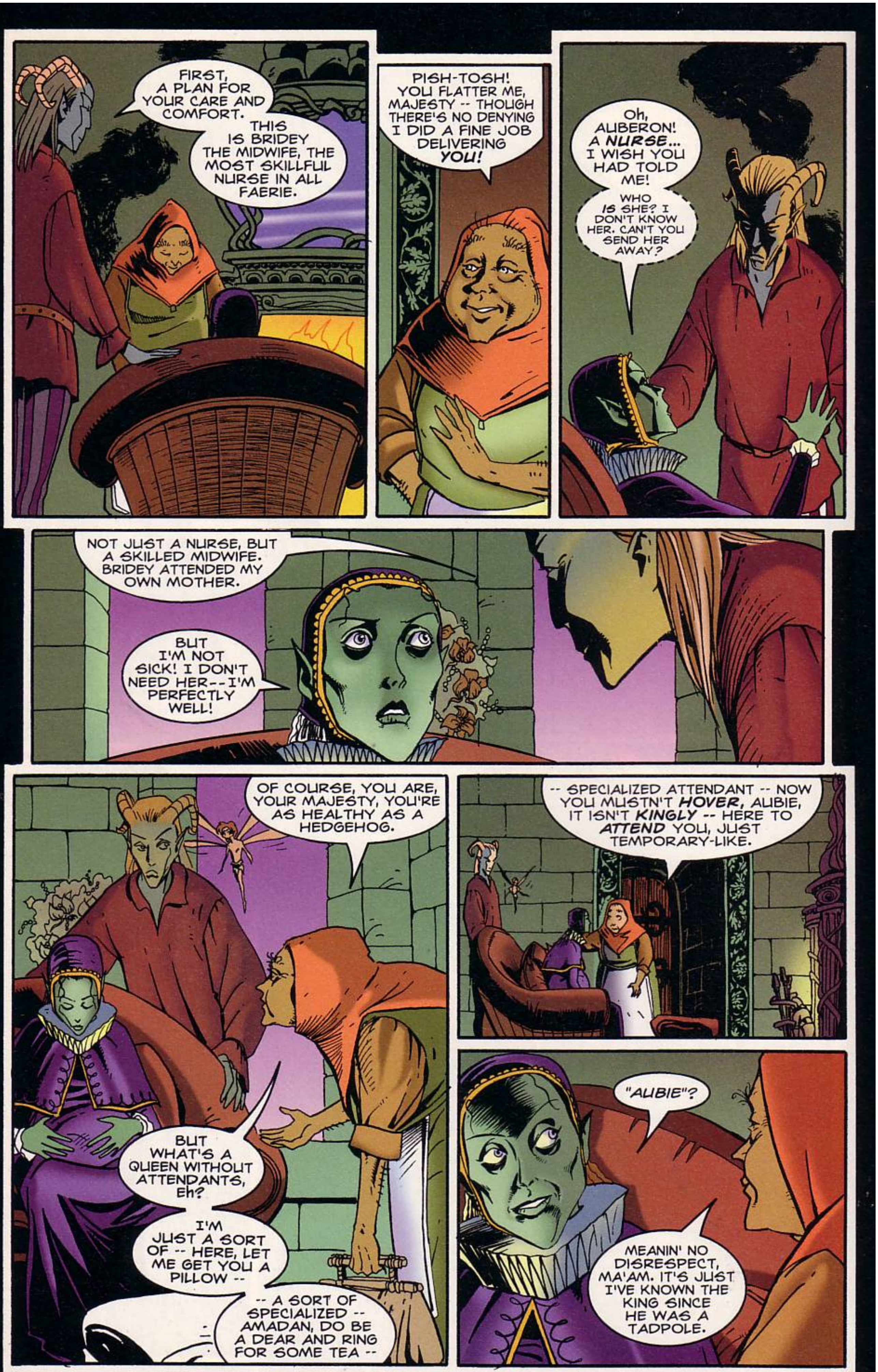

TAMLIN! I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE! THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU.
NO, WAIT. FIRST I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO YOU.
TITANIA, THIS IS WRONG. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN WRONG.
YOU'RE A MARRIED WOMAN -- MARRIED TO THE KING -- AND NO MATTER HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT HIM, IT'S NOT RIGHT FOR US TO GO ON LIKE THIS.
ARE YOU SAYING... YOU DON'T WANT TO MEET ME ANYMORE?

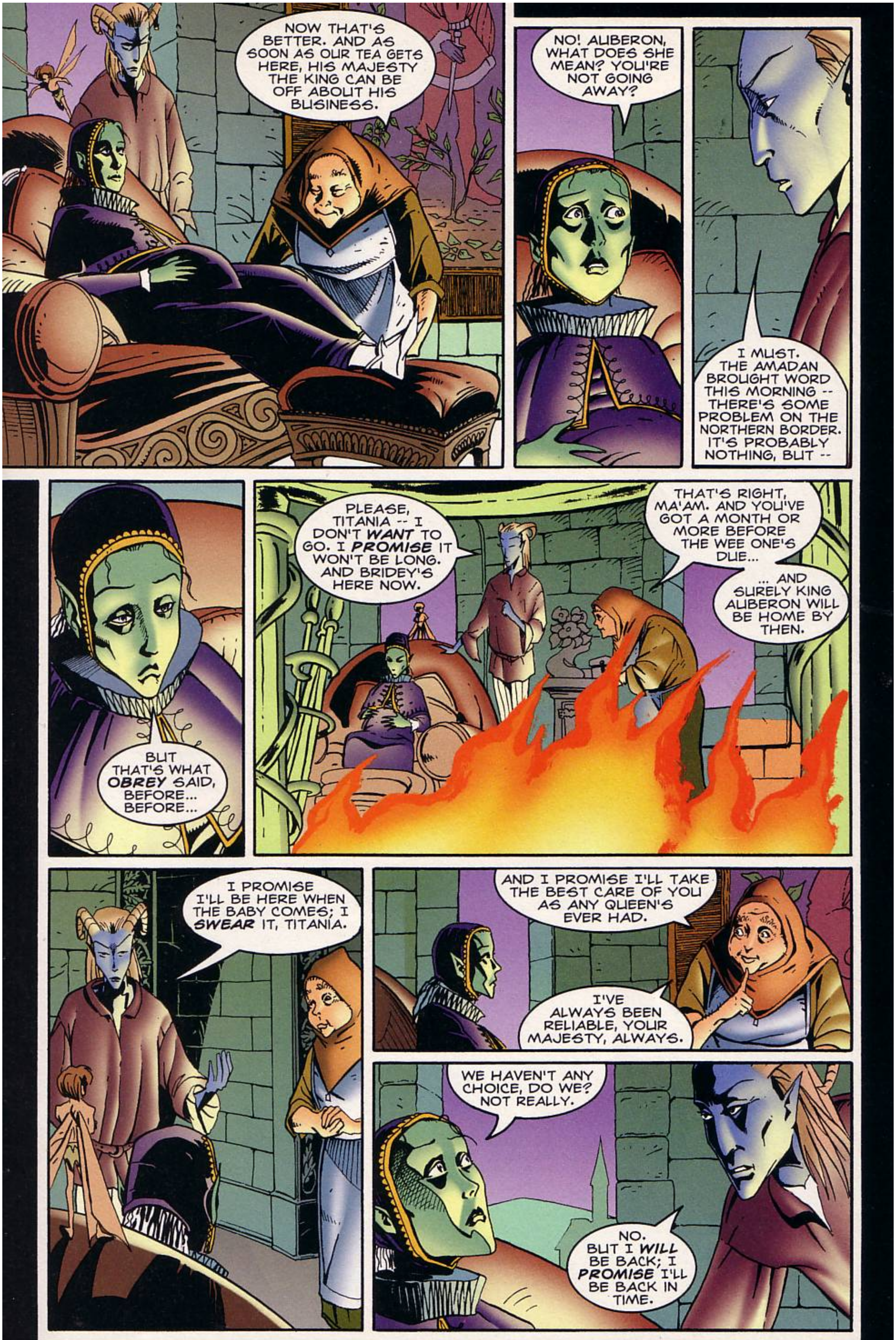

NO!
NO. WHAT I'M SAYING IS -- I WANT YOU TO COME WITH ME TO THE EARTHWORLD, TO **MY** WORLD. WE COULD START OVER, WE COULD BE TOGETHER **HONORABLY.**
TAMLIN, I CAN'T.
YES YOU CAN -- DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
YOU WERE IN THE EARTHWORLD WHEN YOU *LURED* ME INTO FAERIE. YOU CAN GO THERE ANY TIME YOU WANT.
NO, I MEAN I **CAN'T.** AUBERON AND I...
... ARE WORSE THAN ANYTHING!
THE WAY WE'RE TOGETHER, YOU AND I, IT'S NOT RIGHT, BUT YOU AND AUBERON TOGETHER ARE AN ABOMINATION!
WE LOVE EACH OTHER! **WE** BELONG TOGETHER! I CAN'T **BEAR** TO THINK OF YOU WITH AUBERON!
LEAVE HIM -- COME TO THE EARTHWORLD WITH ME.
TAMLIN, **LISTEN** TO ME!
KING AUBERON OF FAERIE HAS THIS DAY ANNOUNCED THAT HE AND HIS WIFE, QUEEN TITANIA, ARE EXPECTING A CHILD.
DID YOU ALWAYS INTEND TO MAKE A FOOL OF ME, TITANIA, OR WAS IT JUST AN ACCIDENT?
STOP IT, TAMLIN! I **DO** LOVE YOU!
THEN DO WHAT'S RIGHT! COME WITH ME, BE WITH **ME!**

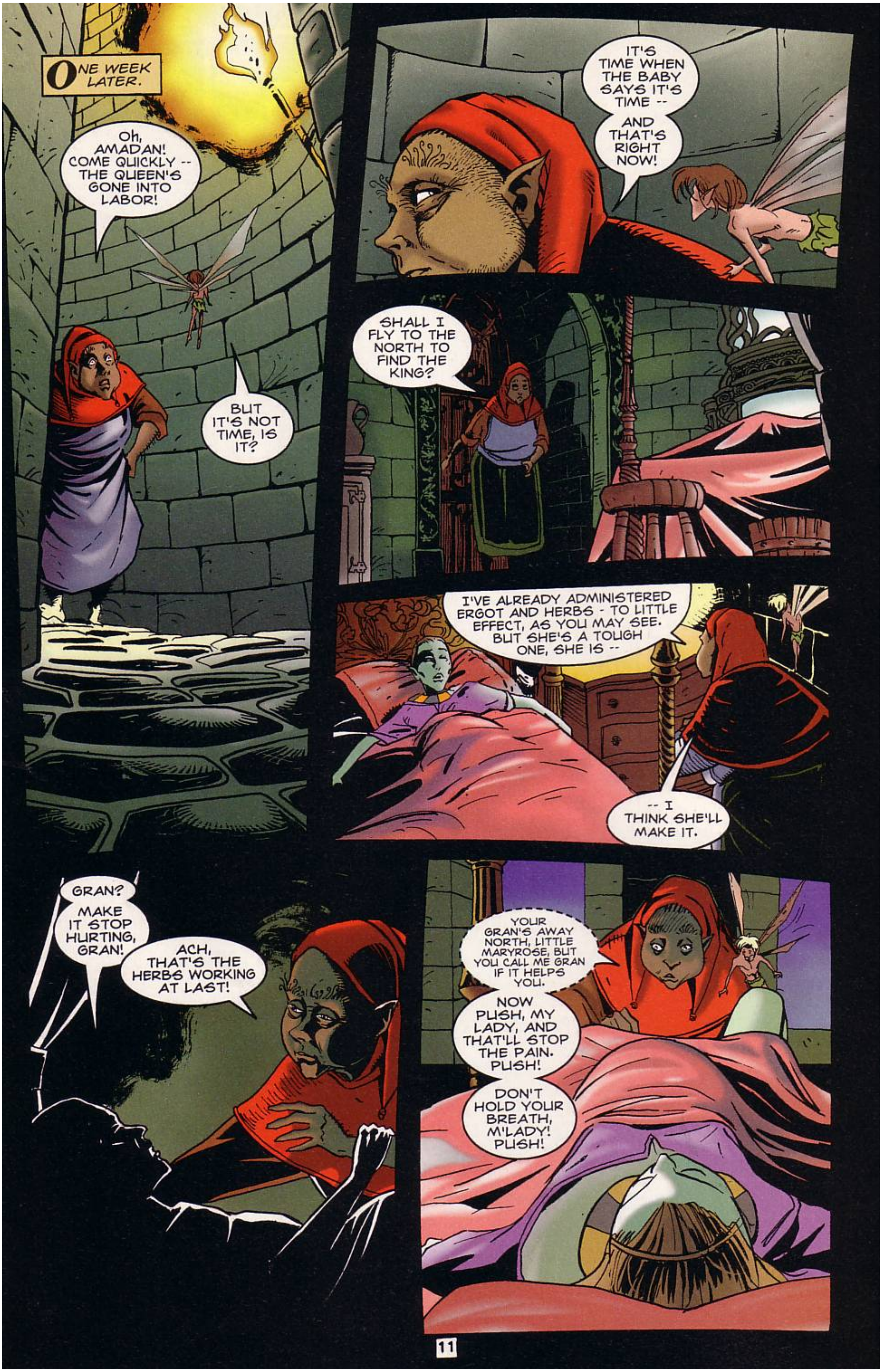

NO!
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE *I* AM TITANIA, QUEEN OF FAERIE!
I SEE.
THAT MEANS MORE TO YOU THAN ANYTHING ELSE, DOESN'T IT?
WELL, TELL ME SOMETHING, **QUEEN** TITANIA -- HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS BABY IS THE KING'S OWN CHILD?
I DON'T KNOW THAT IT IS.
YOU ARE STRONG, **QUEEN** TITANIA --
-- BUT I AM AS STRONG AS YOU.

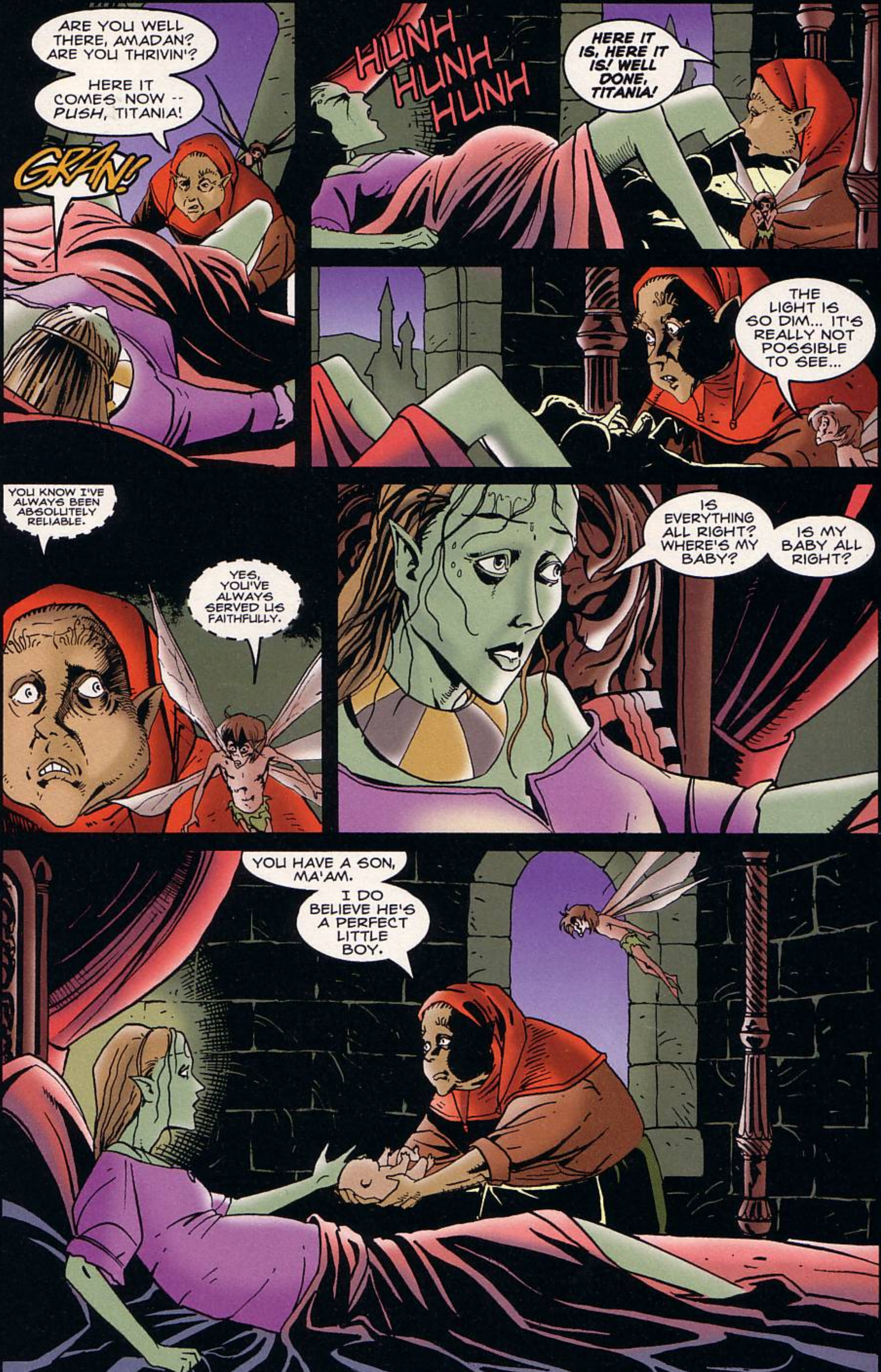

GOOD MORROW, AMADAN! WE WELCOME YOUR RETURN!
GOOD MORROW, PANSY. IS THE QUEEN ABLE TO RECEIVE VISITORS?
IF YOU MEAN, IS SHE DRESSED, SHE IS. I'VE JUST FINISHED WITH HER.
BUT AS FOR HER *ABILITY,* I'M SURE I CAN'T SAY.
VERY GOOD, PANSY. THANK YOU.
PLEASE, AMADAN, ONE WORD.
YOU'VE BEEN AWAY, AND YOU MAY NOT KNOW HOW IT'S BEEN FOR THE QUEEN THESE PAST MONTHS, BUT BE WARNED -- SHE'S SUFFERED GREATLY CARRYING THIS CHILD.
THERE'VE BEEN TIMES WE'VE THOUGHT SHE WAS LIKE TO DIE.
WE ALL -- ALL OF US BELOW STAIRS -- WE HOPE FOR HER HEALTH, AND FOR THE HEALTH OF THE BABY. COULD YOU SOMEHOW LET HER KNOW THAT, PLEASE?
CERTAINLY I SHALL.
MY THANKS, GOOD AMADAN.

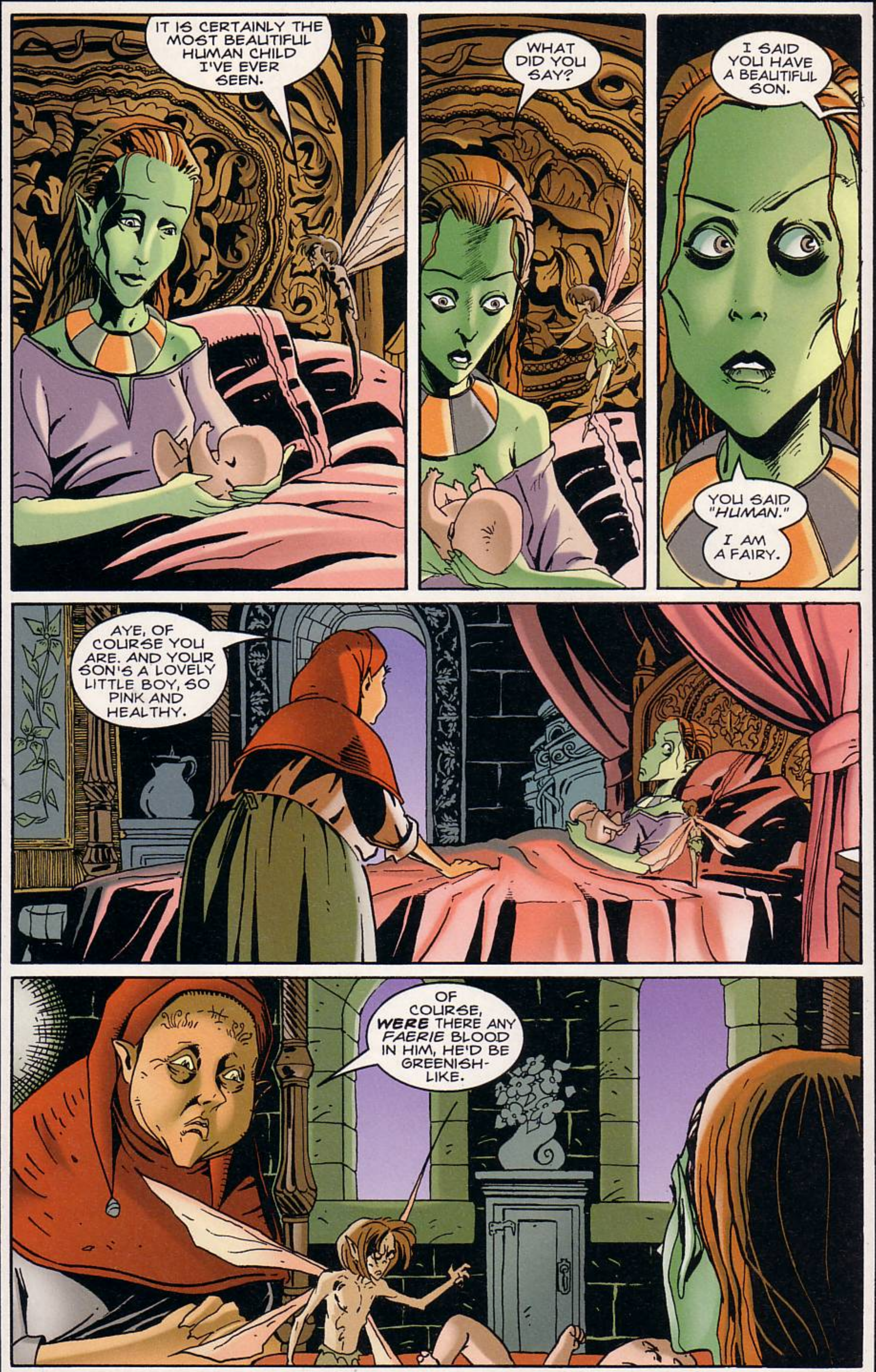

Oh, AMADAN! I AM GLAD YOU'VE COME.
SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE AWAY AT THE NORTHERN BORDER.
I RETURNED THIS MORNING WITH A MESSAGE FOR THE KING.
HAVE YOU SEEN HIM? IS HE COMING HERE?
I BELIEVE HE WILL BE HERE PRESENTLY. IS THERE SOMETHING THAT YOU NEED?
NO, ONLY... THESE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE NOT BEEN EASY ONES.
I'VE NOT BEEN OUT MUCH, AND I MISS... I MISS MY FALCON.
THE KING!
GOOD MORROW, QUEEN WIFE. NEVER FEAR -- WE'LL BE HUNTING AGAIN IN NO TIME.
Ah, AMADAN! HAVE YOU INFORMED THE QUEEN OF OUR PLANS?
NO, YOUR MAJESTY -- I'VE ONLY JUST ARRIVED.
WHAT PLANS?

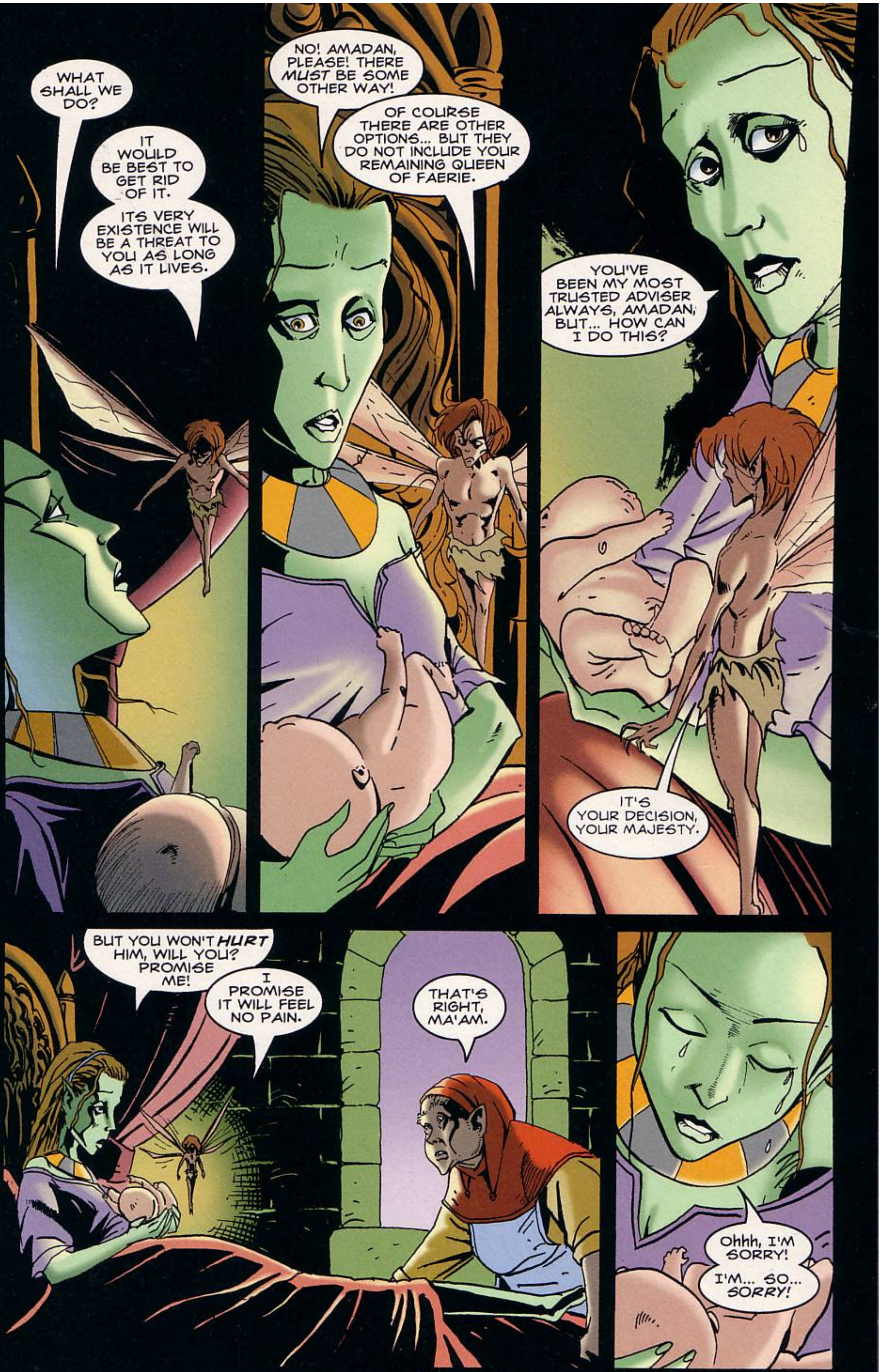

FIRST, A PLAN FOR YOUR CARE AND COMFORT.
THIS IS BRIDEY THE MIDWIFE, THE MOST SKILLFUL NURSE IN ALL FAERIE.
PISH-TOSH! YOU FLATTER ME, MAJESTY -- THOUGH THERE'S NO DENYING I DID A FINE JOB DELIVERING *YOU!*
Oh, AUBERON! A *NURSE*... I WISH YOU HAD TOLD ME!
WHO *IS* SHE? I DON'T KNOW HER. CAN'T YOU SEND HER AWAY?
NOT JUST A NURSE, BUT A SKILLED MIDWIFE. BRIDEY ATTENDED MY OWN MOTHER.
BUT I'M NOT SICK! I DON'T NEED HER--I'M PERFECTLY WELL!
OF COURSE, YOU ARE, YOUR MAJESTY, YOU'RE AS HEALTHY AS A HEDGEHOG.
BUT WHAT'S A QUEEN WITHOUT ATTENDANTS, Eh?
I'M JUST A SORT OF -- HERE, LET ME GET YOU A PILLOW --
-- A SORT OF SPECIALIZED -- AMADAN, DO BE A DEAR AND RING FOR SOME TEA --
-- SPECIALIZED ATTENDANT -- NOW YOU MUSTN'T *HOVER,* AUBIE, IT ISN'T *KINGLY* -- HERE TO *ATTEND* YOU, JUST TEMPORARY-LIKE.
"AUBIE"?
MEANIN' NO DISRESPECT, MA'AM. IT'S JUST I'VE KNOWN THE KING SINCE HE WAS A TADPOLE.

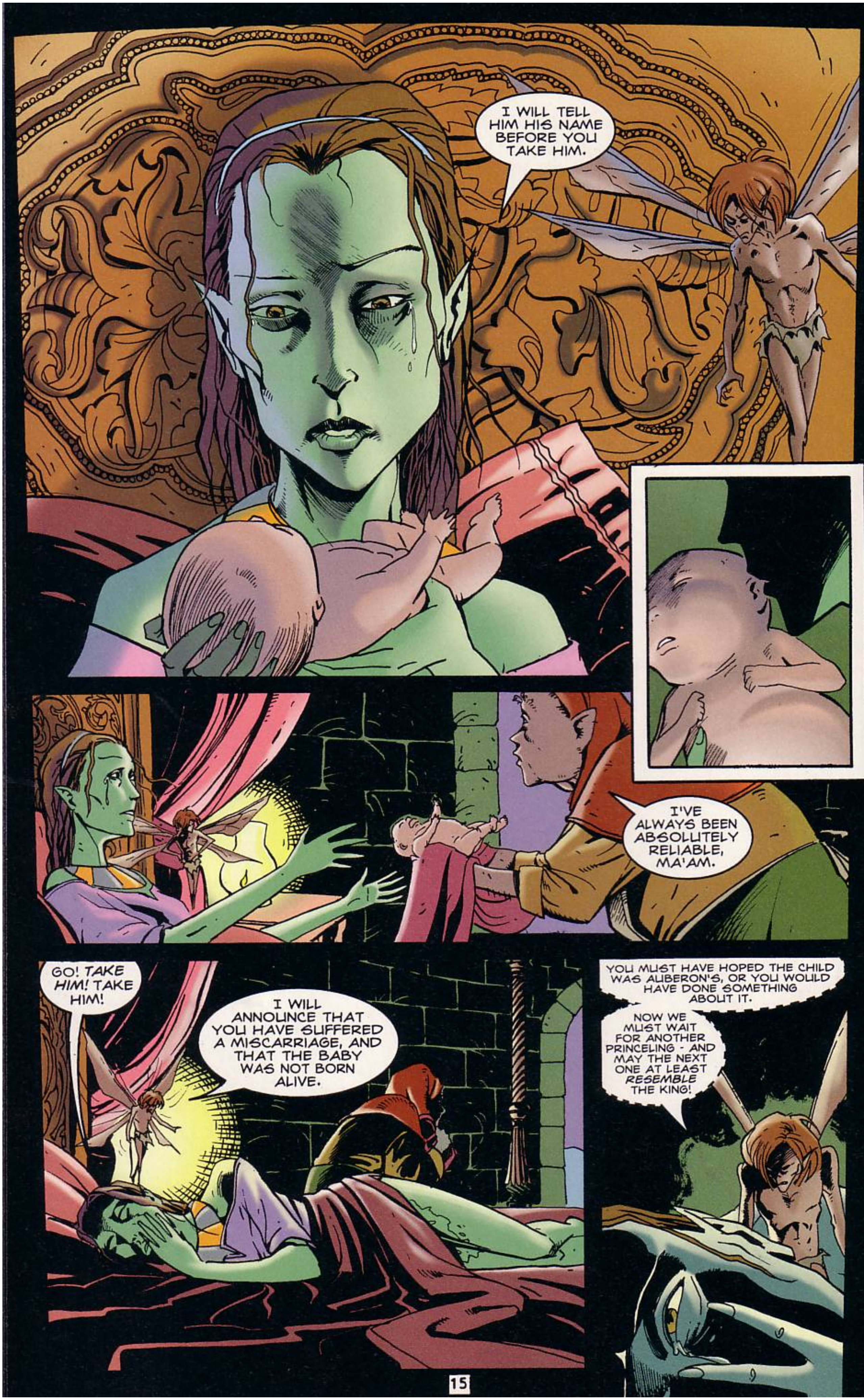

NOW THAT'S BETTER. AND AS SOON AS OUR TEA GETS HERE, HIS MAJESTY THE KING CAN BE OFF ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.
NO! AUBERON, WHAT DOES SHE MEAN? YOU'RE NOT GOING AWAY?
I MUST. THE AMADAN BROUGHT WORD THIS MORNING -- THERE'S SOME PROBLEM ON THE NORTHERN BORDER. IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING, BUT --
BUT THAT'S WHAT OBREY SAID, BEFORE... BEFORE...
PLEASE, TITANIA -- I DON'T WANT TO GO. I PROMISE IT WON'T BE LONG. AND BRIDEY'S HERE NOW.
THAT'S RIGHT, MA'AM. AND YOU'VE GOT A MONTH OR MORE BEFORE THE WEE ONE'S DUE...
... AND SURELY KING AUBERON WILL BE HOME BY THEN.
I PROMISE I'LL BE HERE WHEN THE BABY COMES; I SWEAR IT, TITANIA.
AND I PROMISE I'LL TAKE THE BEST CARE OF YOU AS ANY QUEEN'S EVER HAD.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN RELIABLE, YOUR MAJESTY, ALWAYS.
WE HAVEN'T ANY CHOICE, DO WE? NOT REALLY.
NO. BUT I WILL BE BACK; I PROMISE I'LL BE BACK IN TIME.

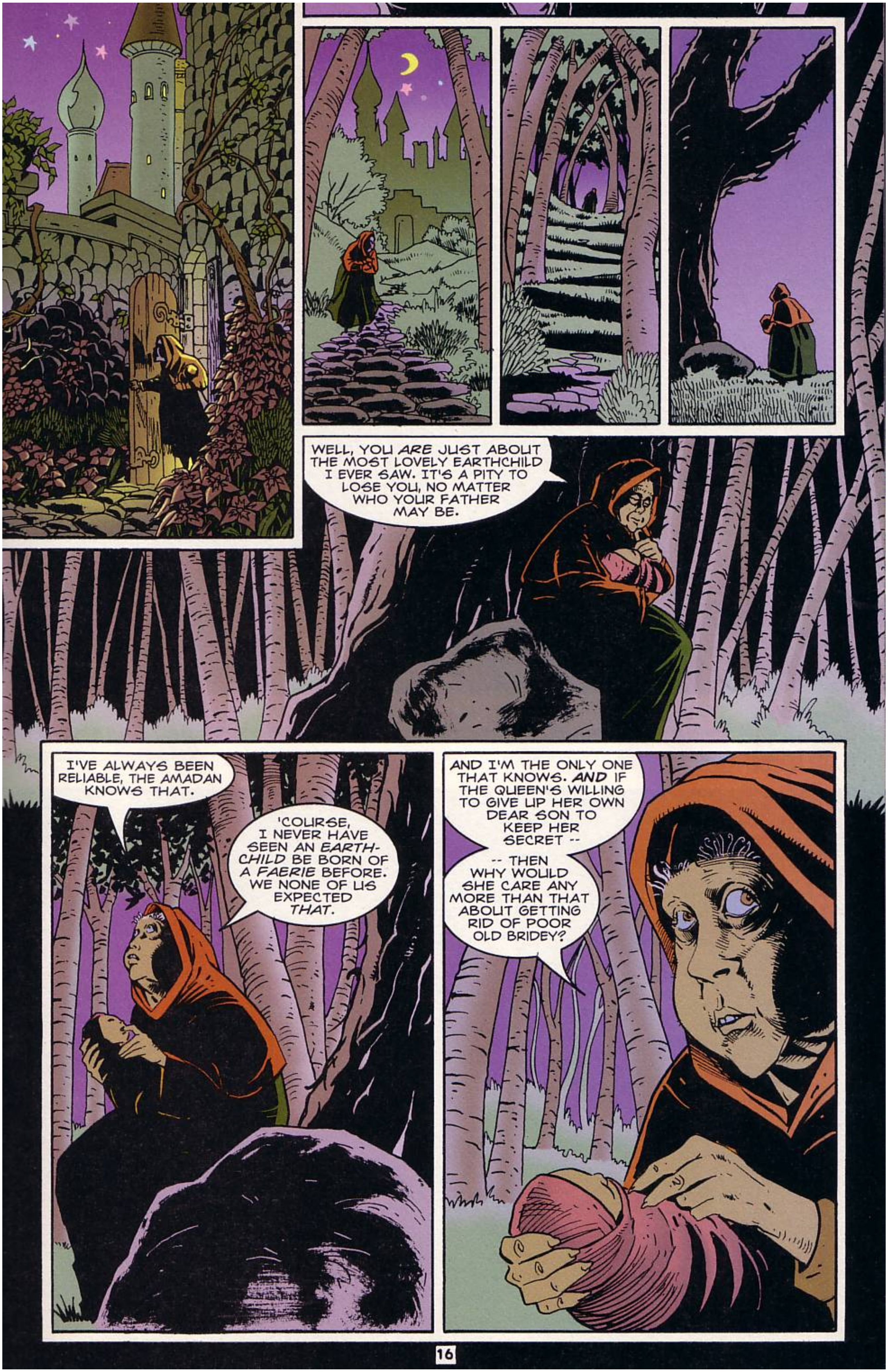

ONE WEEK LATER.
Oh, AMADAN! COME QUICKLY -- THE QUEEN'S GONE INTO LABOR!
BUT IT'S NOT TIME, IS IT?
IT'S TIME WHEN THE BABY SAYS IT'S TIME --
AND THAT'S RIGHT NOW!
SHALL I FLY TO THE NORTH TO FIND THE KING?
I'VE ALREADY ADMINISTERED ERGOT AND HERBS - TO LITTLE EFFECT, AS YOU MAY SEE. BUT SHE'S A TOUGH ONE, SHE IS --
-- I THINK SHE'LL MAKE IT.
GRAN?
MAKE IT STOP HURTING, GRAN!
ACH, THAT'S THE HERBS WORKING AT LAST!
YOUR GRAN'S AWAY NORTH, LITTLE MARYROSE, BUT YOU CALL ME GRAN IF IT HELPS YOU.
NOW PUSH, MY LADY, AND THAT'LL STOP THE PAIN. PUSH!
DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH, M'LADY! PUSH!

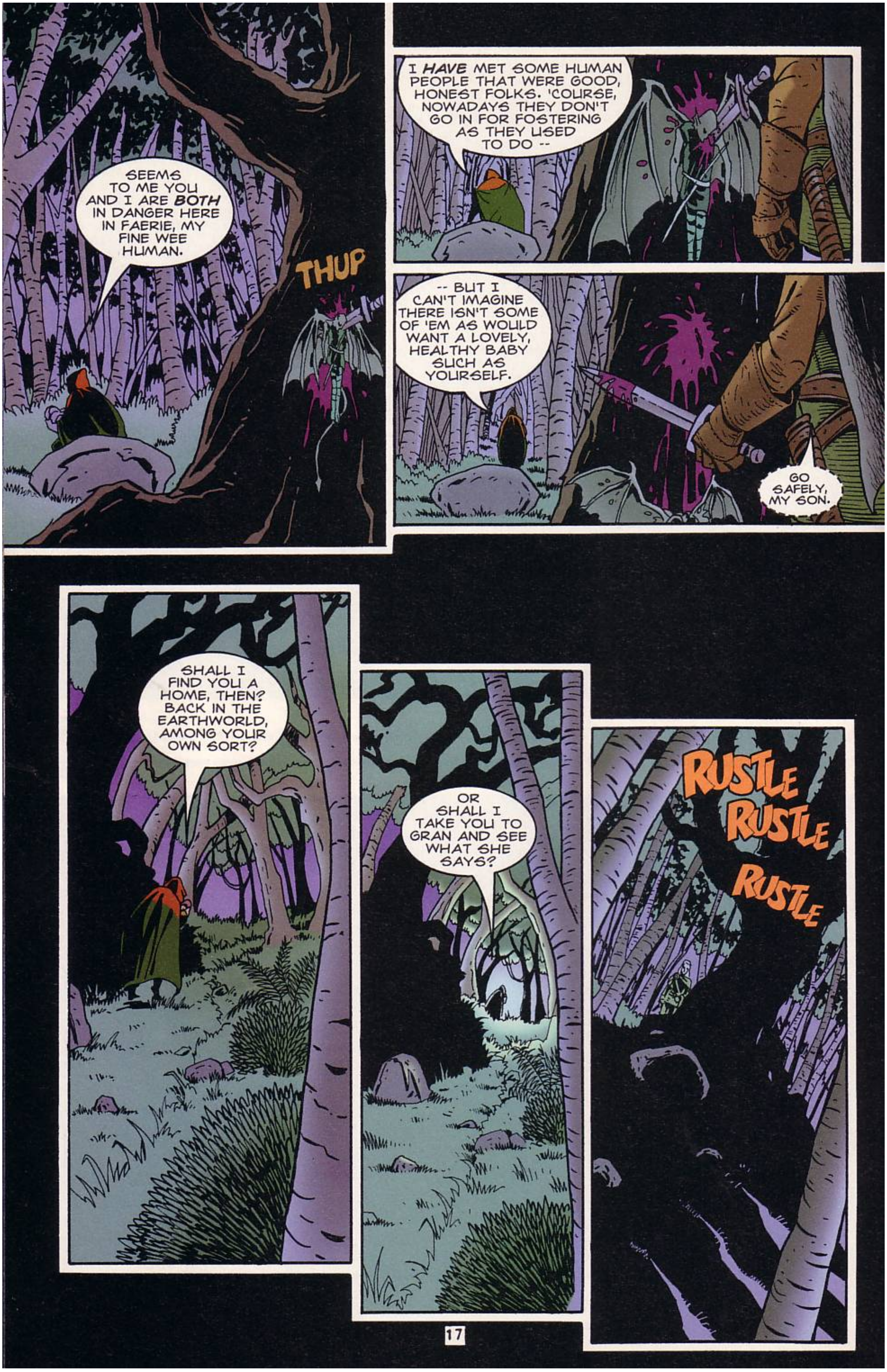

ARE YOU WELL THERE, AMADAN? ARE YOU THRIVIN'?
HERE IT COMES NOW -- *PUSH*, TITANIA!
GRAN!
HUNH HUNH HUNH
HERE IT IS, HERE IT IS! WELL DONE, TITANIA!
THE LIGHT IS SO DIM... IT'S REALLY NOT POSSIBLE TO SEE...
YOU KNOW I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABSOLUTELY RELIABLE.
YES, YOU'VE ALWAYS SERVED US FAITHFULLY.
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? WHERE'S MY BABY?
IS MY BABY ALL RIGHT?
YOU HAVE A SON, MA'AM.
I DO BELIEVE HE'S A PERFECT LITTLE BOY.

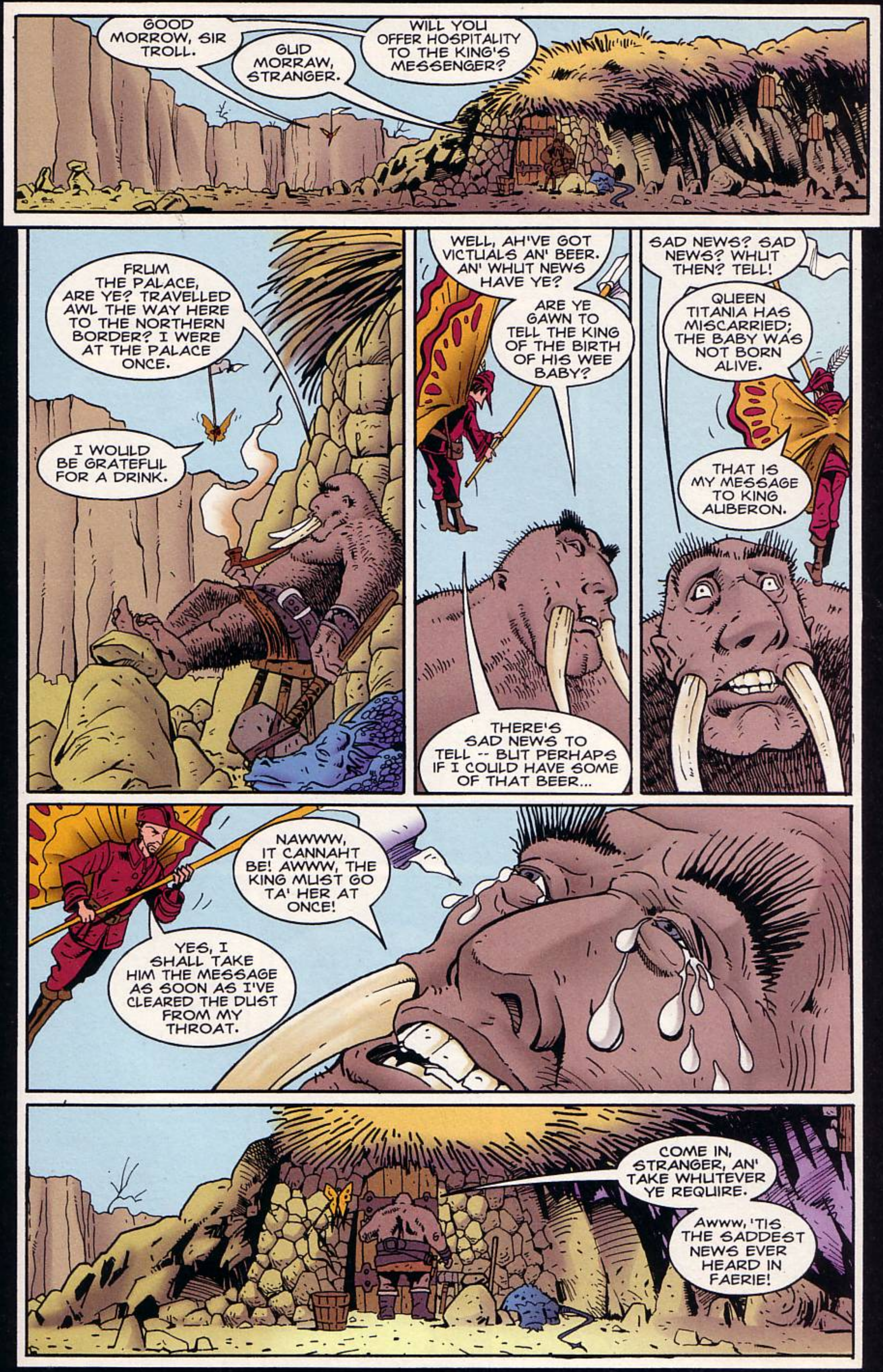

IT IS CERTAINLY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HUMAN CHILD I'VE EVER SEEN.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I SAID YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL SON.
YOU SAID "*HUMAN.*"
I AM A FAIRY.
AYE, OF COURSE YOU ARE. AND YOUR SON'S A LOVELY LITTLE BOY, SO PINK AND HEALTHY.
OF COURSE, ***WERE*** THERE ANY *FAERIE* BLOOD IN HIM, HE'D BE GREENISH-LIKE.

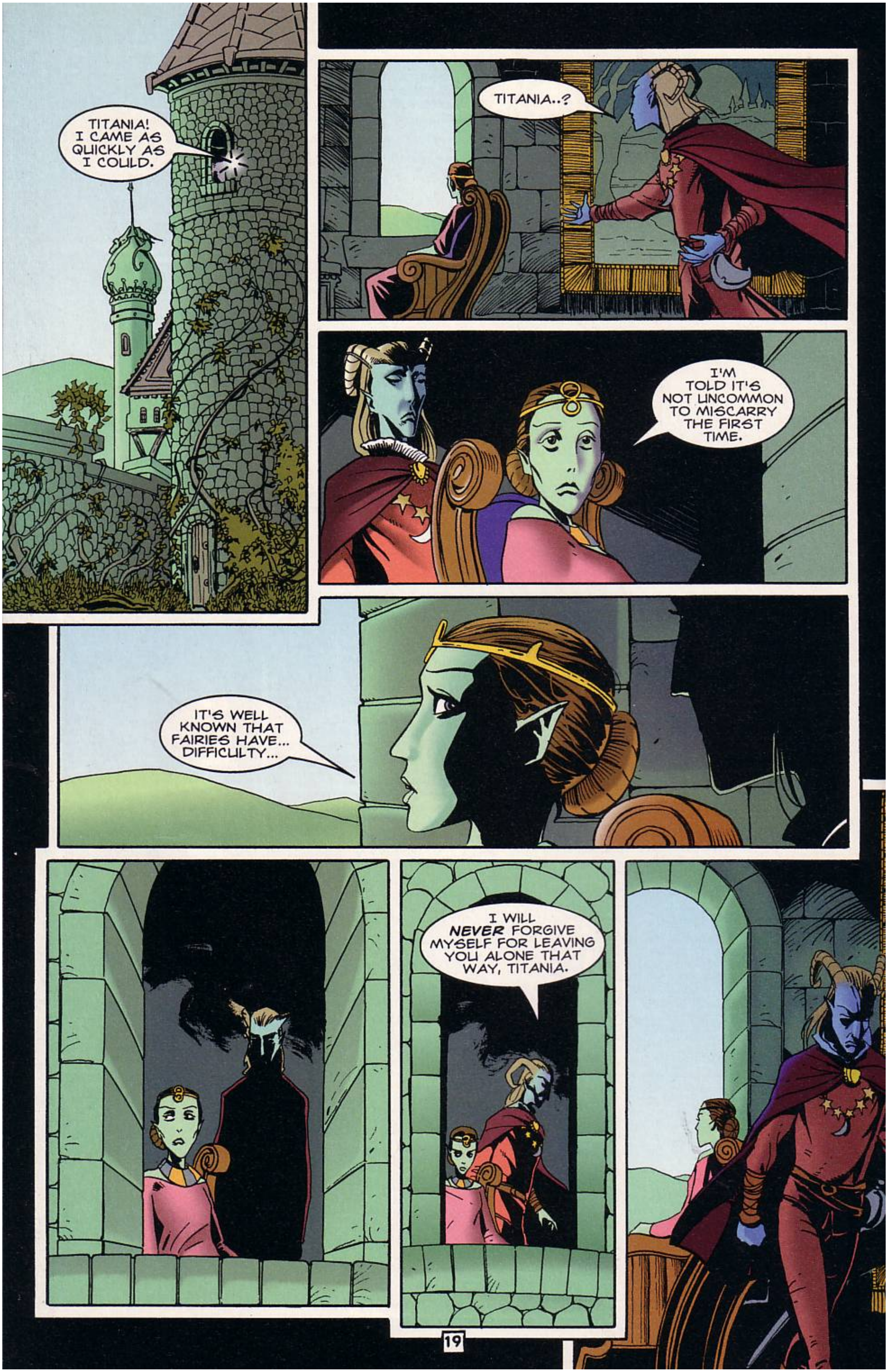

WHAT SHALL WE DO?
IT WOULD BE BEST TO GET RID OF IT.
ITS VERY EXISTENCE WILL BE A THREAT TO YOU AS LONG AS IT LIVES.
NO! AMADAN, PLEASE! THERE *MUST* BE SOME OTHER WAY!
OF COURSE THERE ARE OTHER OPTIONS... BUT THEY DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR REMAINING QUEEN OF FAERIE.
YOU'VE BEEN MY MOST TRUSTED ADVISER ALWAYS, AMADAN; BUT... HOW CAN I DO THIS?
IT'S YOUR DECISION, YOUR MAJESTY.
BUT YOU WON'T ***HURT*** HIM, WILL YOU? PROMISE ME!
I PROMISE IT WILL FEEL NO PAIN.
THAT'S RIGHT, MA'AM.
Ohhh, I'M SORRY!
I'M... SO... *SORRY!*

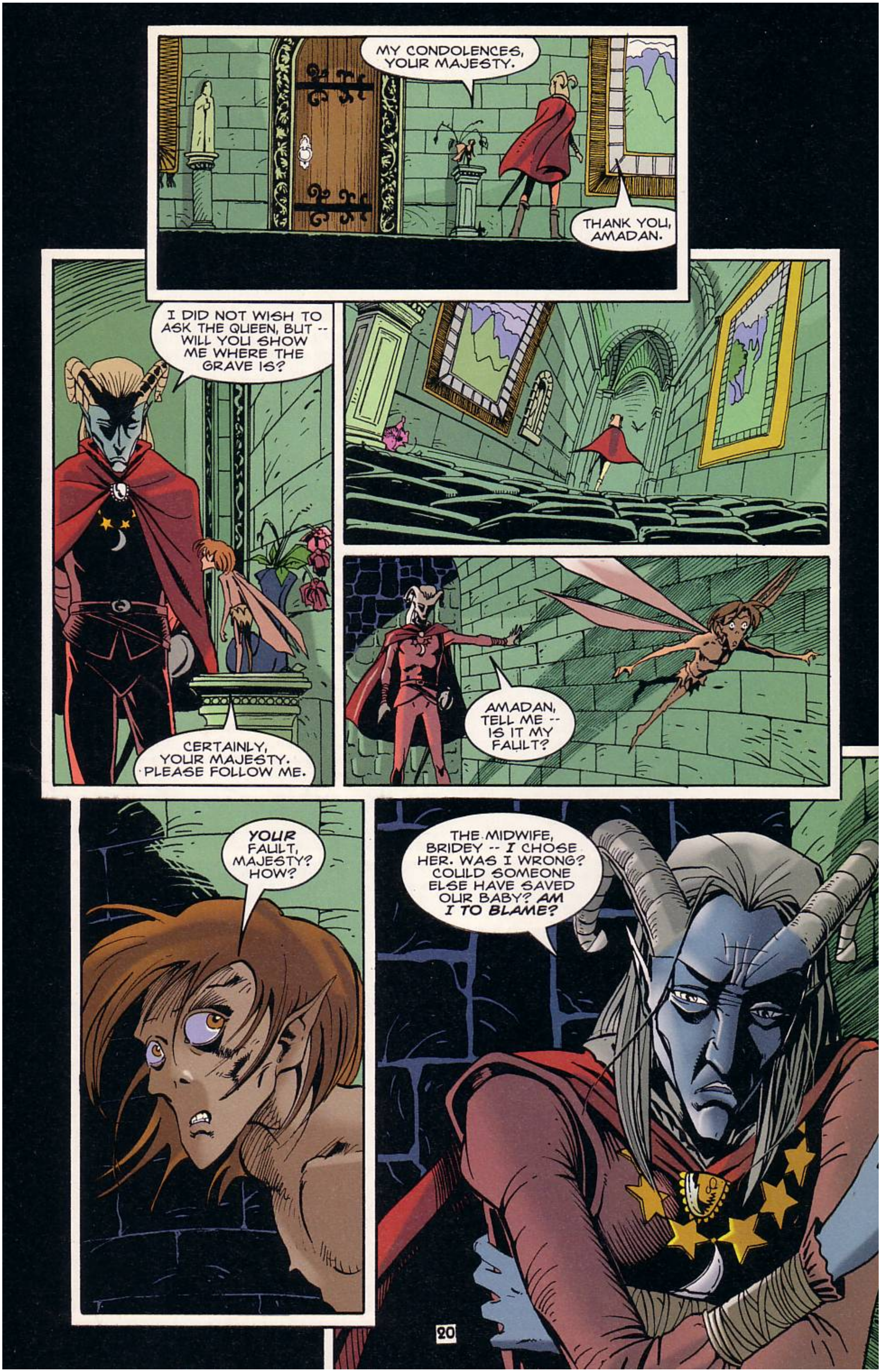

I WILL TELL HIM HIS NAME BEFORE YOU TAKE HIM.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABSOLUTELY RELIABLE, MA'AM.
GO! *TAKE HIM!* TAKE HIM!
I WILL ANNOUNCE THAT YOU HAVE SUFFERED A MISCARRIAGE, AND THAT THE BABY WAS NOT BORN ALIVE.
YOU MUST HAVE HOPED THE CHILD WAS AUBERON'S, OR YOU WOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
NOW WE MUST WAIT FOR ANOTHER PRINCELING - AND MAY THE NEXT ONE AT LEAST *RESEMBLE* THE KING!

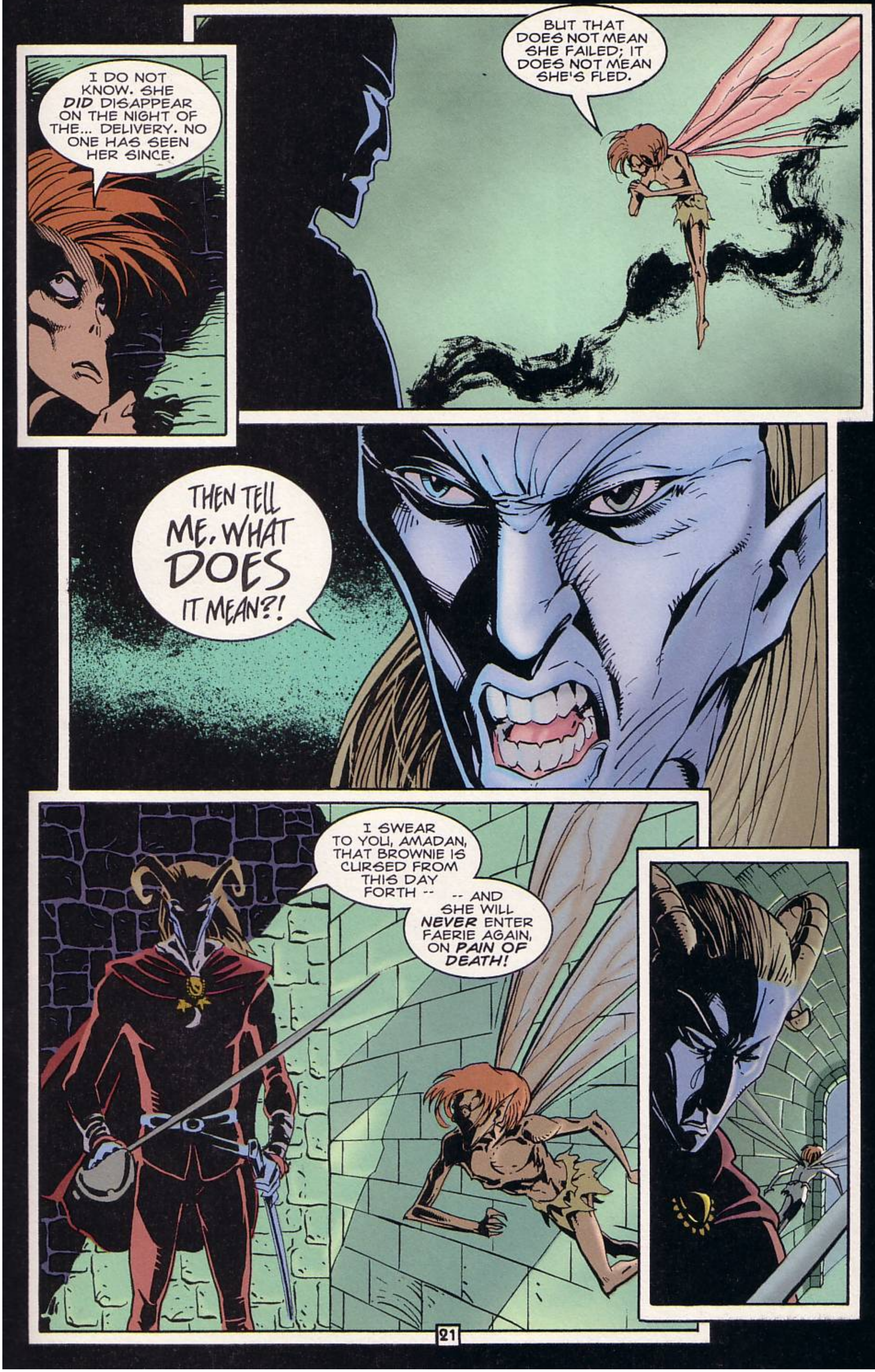

WELL, YOU *ARE* JUST ABOUT THE MOST LOVELY EARTHCHILD I EVER SAW. IT'S A PITY TO LOSE YOU, NO MATTER WHO YOUR FATHER MAY BE.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN RELIABLE, THE AMADAN KNOWS THAT.
'COURSE, I NEVER HAVE SEEN AN *EARTHCHILD* BE BORN OF A *FAERIE* BEFORE. WE NONE OF US EXPECTED *THAT*.
AND I'M THE ONLY ONE THAT KNOWS. ***AND*** IF THE QUEEN'S WILLING TO GIVE UP HER OWN DEAR SON TO KEEP HER SECRET --
-- THEN WHY WOULD SHE CARE ANY MORE THAN THAT ABOUT GETTING RID OF POOR OLD BRIDEY?

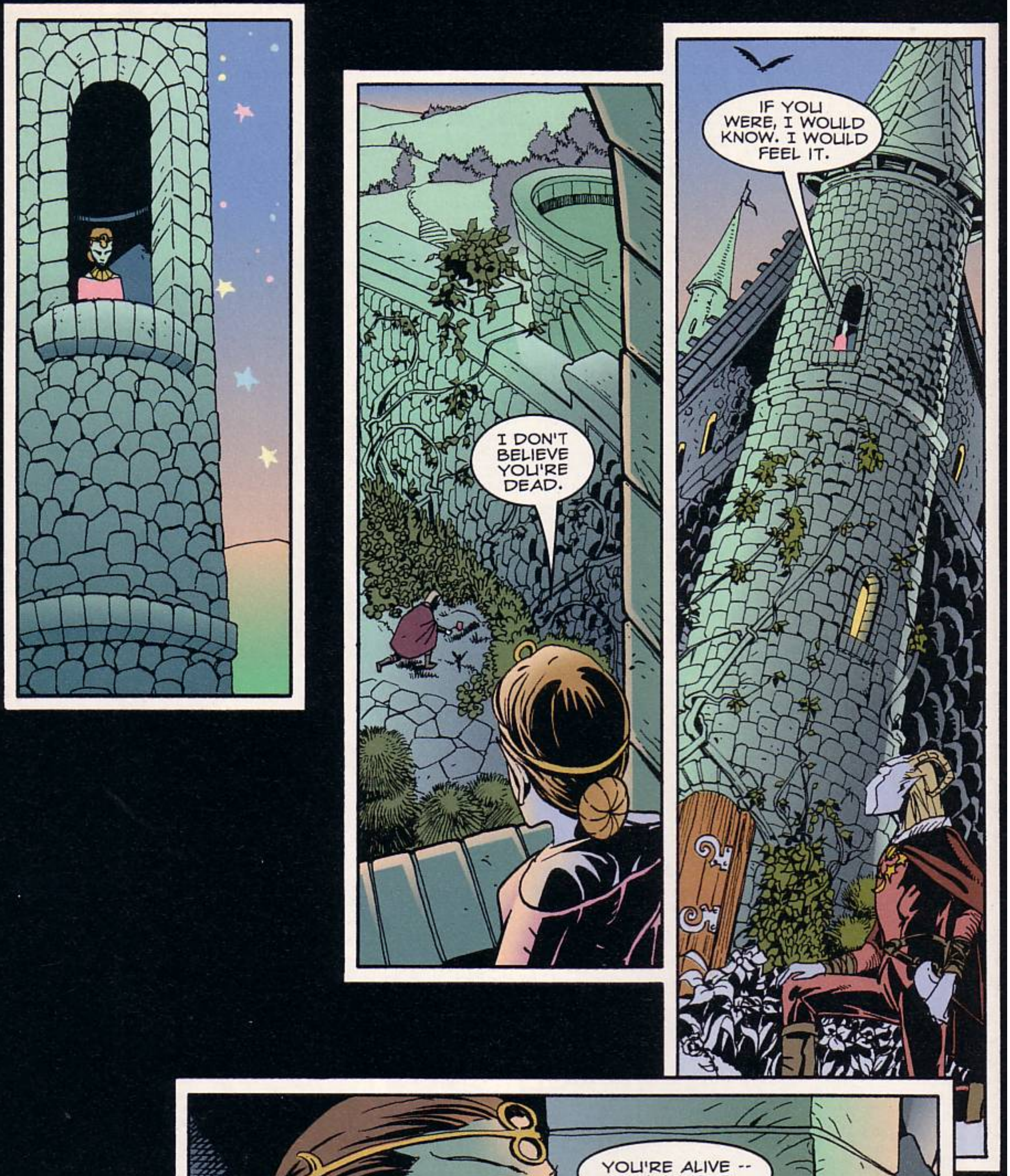

SEEMS TO ME YOU AND I ARE *BOTH* IN DANGER HERE IN FAERIE, MY FINE WEE HUMAN.
THUP
I *HAVE* MET SOME HUMAN PEOPLE THAT WERE GOOD, HONEST FOLKS. 'COURSE, NOWADAYS THEY DON'T GO IN FOR FOSTERING AS THEY USED TO DO --
-- BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE THERE ISN'T SOME OF 'EM AS WOULD WANT A LOVELY, HEALTHY BABY SUCH AS YOURSELF.
GO SAFELY, MY SON.
SHALL I FIND YOU A HOME, THEN? BACK IN THE EARTHWORLD, AMONG YOUR OWN SORT?
OR SHALL I TAKE YOU TO GRAN AND SEE WHAT SHE SAYS?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

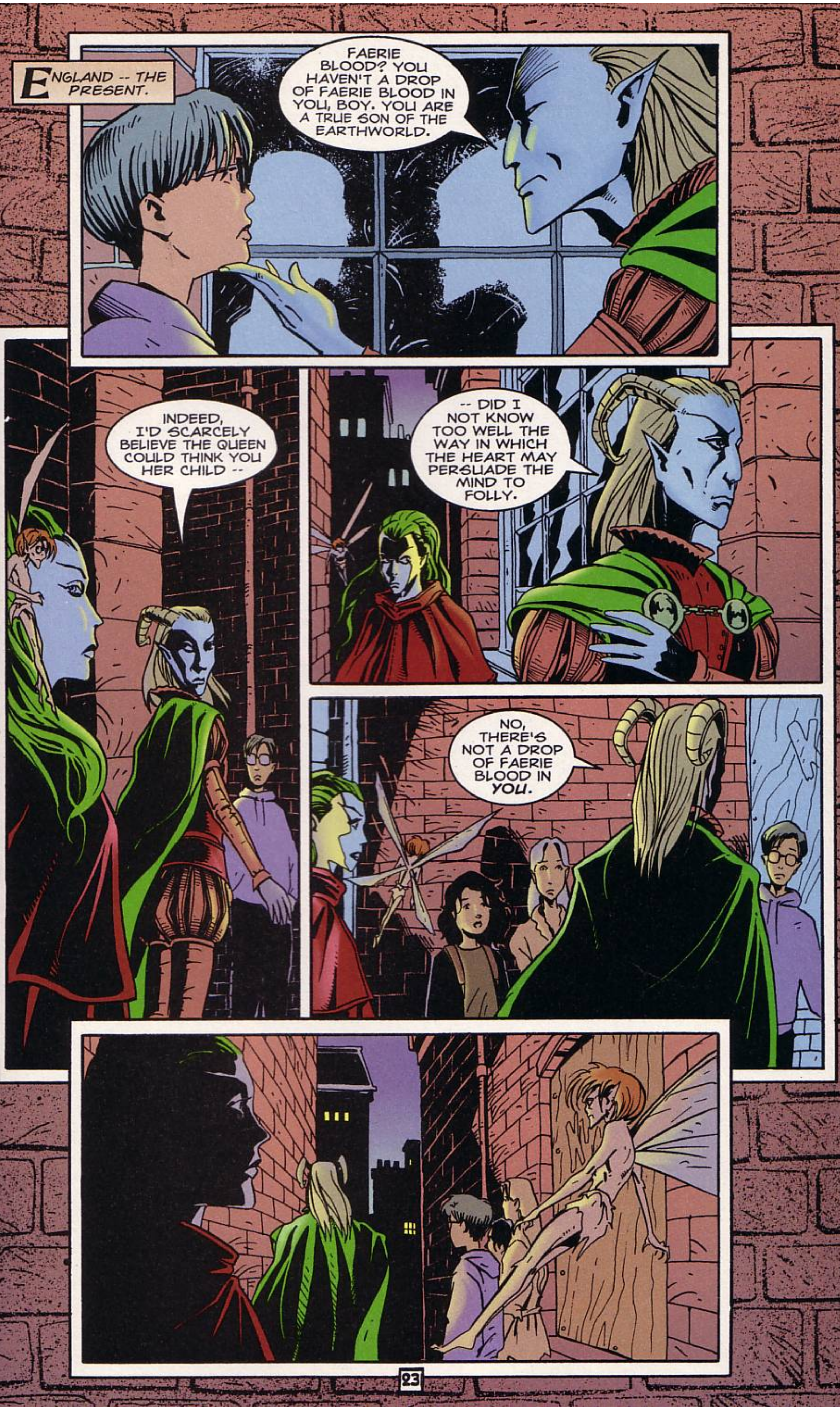

GOOD MORROW, SIR TROLL.
GUD MORRAW, STRANGER.
WILL YOU OFFER HOSPITALITY TO THE KING'S MESSENGER?
FRUM THE PALACE, ARE YE? TRAVELLED AWL THE WAY HERE TO THE NORTHERN BORDER? I WERE AT THE PALACE ONCE.
I WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR A DRINK.
WELL, AH'VE GOT VICTUALS AN' BEER. AN' WHUT NEWS HAVE YE?
ARE YE GAWN TO TELL THE KING OF THE BIRTH OF HIS WEE BABY?
THERE'S SAD NEWS TO TELL -- BUT PERHAPS IF I COULD HAVE SOME OF THAT BEER...
SAD NEWS? SAD NEWS? WHUT THEN? TELL!
QUEEN TITANIA HAS MISCARRIED; THE BABY WAS NOT BORN ALIVE.
THAT IS MY MESSAGE TO KING AUBERON.
NAWWW, IT CANNAHT BE! AWWW, THE KING MUST GO TA' HER AT ONCE!
YES, I SHALL TAKE HIM THE MESSAGE AS SOON AS I'VE CLEARED THE DUST FROM MY THROAT.
COME IN, STRANGER, AN' TAKE WHUTEVER YE REQUIRE.
AWWW, 'TIS THE SADDEST NEWS EVER HEARD IN FAERIE!

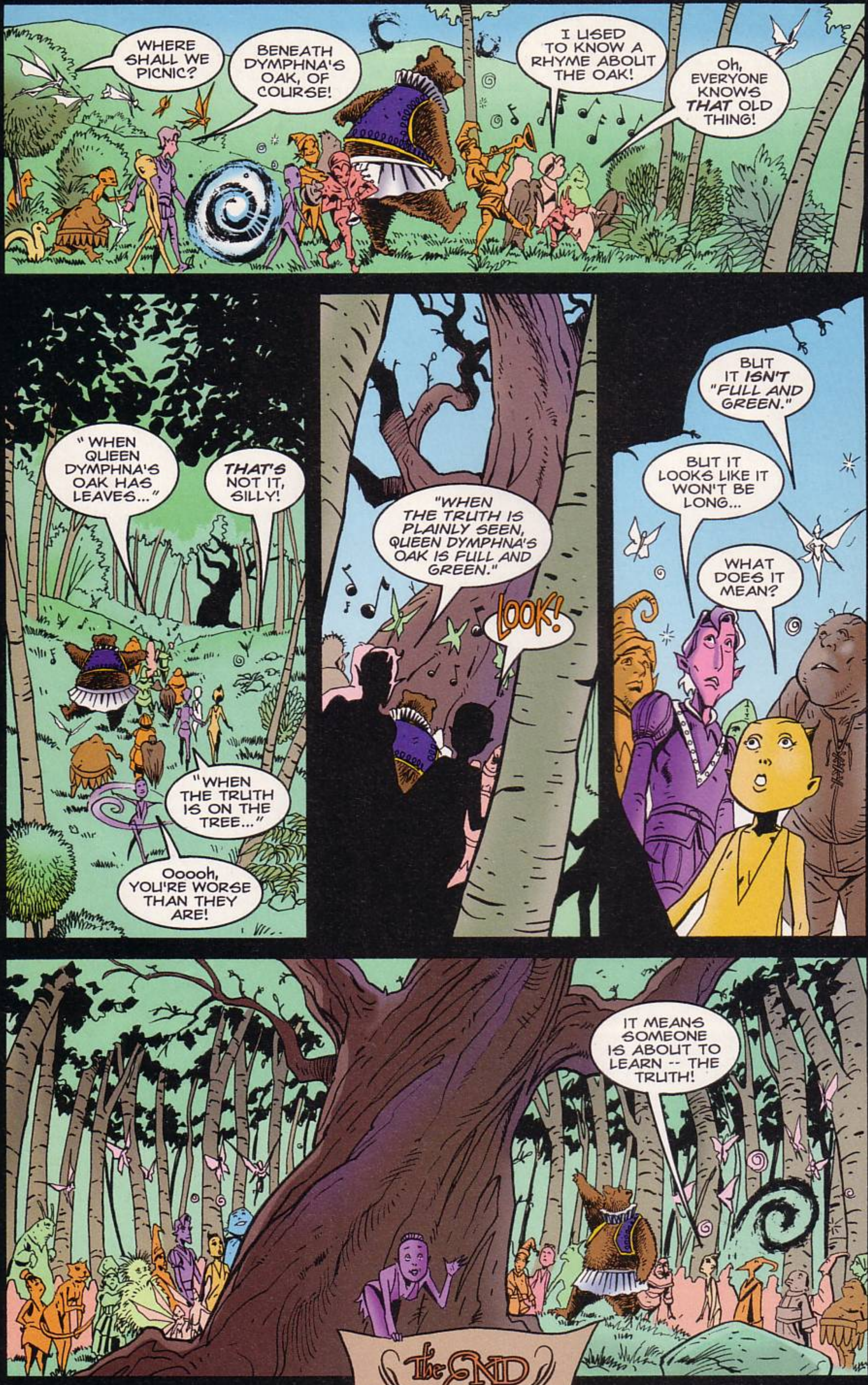

TITANIA! I CAME AS QUICKLY AS I COULD.
TITANIA..?
I'M TOLD IT'S NOT UNCOMMON TO MISCARRY THE FIRST TIME.
IT'S WELL KNOWN THAT FAIRIES HAVE... DIFFICULTY...
I WILL **NEVER** FORGIVE MYSELF FOR LEAVING YOU ALONE THAT WAY, TITANIA.


MY CONDOLENCES, YOUR MAJESTY.
THANK YOU, AMADAN.
I DID NOT WISH TO ASK THE QUEEN, BUT -- WILL YOU SHOW ME WHERE THE GRAVE IS?
CERTAINLY, YOUR MAJESTY. PLEASE FOLLOW ME.
AMADAN, TELL ME -- IS IT MY FAULT?
YOUR FAULT, MAJESTY? HOW?
THE MIDWIFE, BRIDEY -- *I* CHOSE HER. WAS I WRONG? COULD SOMEONE ELSE HAVE SAVED OUR BABY? *AM I TO BLAME?*


I DO NOT KNOW. SHE *DID* DISAPPEAR ON THE NIGHT OF THE... DELIVERY. NO ONE HAS SEEN HER SINCE.
BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN SHE FAILED; IT DOES NOT MEAN SHE'S FLED.
THEN TELL ME, WHAT **DOES** IT MEAN?!
I SWEAR TO YOU, AMADAN, THAT BROWNIE IS CURSED FROM THIS DAY FORTH --
-- AND SHE WILL ***NEVER*** ENTER FAERIE AGAIN, ON ***PAIN OF DEATH!***


I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DEAD.
IF YOU WERE, I WOULD KNOW. I WOULD FEEL IT.
YOU'RE ALIVE -- SOMEWHERE...


ENGLAND -- THE PRESENT.
FAERIE BLOOD? YOU HAVEN'T A DROP OF FAERIE BLOOD IN YOU, BOY. YOU ARE A TRUE SON OF THE EARTHWORLD.
INDEED, I'D SCARCELY BELIEVE THE QUEEN COULD THINK YOU HER CHILD --
-- DID I NOT KNOW TOO WELL THE WAY IN WHICH THE HEART MAY PERSUADE THE MIND TO FOLLY.
NO, THERE'S NOT A DROP OF FAERIE BLOOD IN *YOU*.


WHERE SHALL WE PICNIC?
BENEATH DYMPHNA'S OAK, OF COURSE!
I USED TO KNOW A RHYME ABOUT THE OAK!
Oh, EVERYONE KNOWS *THAT* OLD THING!
"WHEN QUEEN DYMPHNA'S OAK HAS LEAVES..."
THAT'S NOT IT, SILLY!
"WHEN THE TRUTH IS ON THE TREE..."
Ooooh, YOU'RE WORSE THAN THEY ARE!
"WHEN THE TRUTH IS PLAINLY SEEN, QUEEN DYMPHNA'S OAK IS FULL AND GREEN."
LOOK!
BUT IT *ISN'T "FULL AND GREEN."*
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE IT WON'T BE LONG...
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
IT MEANS SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO LEARN -- THE TRUTH!
The END

THE BOOKS OF FAERIE

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VERTIGO

So, that wraps up THE BOOKS OF FAERIE, and hopefully, based on the kind of response we get, it won't be the last of its kind. My guess is that this miniseries probably raises more questions than it answers, but hey, that's the fun of the game, no? In the past two text pages, both Bronwyn and Peter have shared their thoughts on the topic, and on the fact that this tale is but one version of these events and characters. I think it's safe to say that while they agree on certain parts of the story Bronwyn's spun out, they may not agree on where this story could take us. Clearly, there are many possibilities, and with this tale now in the mix, I expect I'll be getting even more proposed theories than before. In any case, I do have a few reactions to issue #1 (which, as of this writing, has not even hit the stores yet) so I'll move on to those and invite the rest of you to please feel free to write in with your comments (or e-mail to DCOVeMail@aol.com) and I'll try to find space for them somewhere in the BOOKS OF MAGIC's lettercol. Onward to a few thoughts on issue #1.

—Julie Rottenberg

The following was taken from a joint review session between two readers taking place on AOL, so I'll publish their dialogue as it appeared.

ELAYNE WECHSLER-CHAPUT
FIREHEAD@PANIX.COM
EDWARD DOUGLAS
SHADES031@AOL.COM

EWC: Oh, this is lovely! I was so sad when Peter Gross left BOOKS OF MAGIC (even though I think Snejbjerg's doing a creditable job there), but when he and Bronwyn first mentioned this project my eyes lit up. My anticipation has been more than amply rewarded. Essentially, this first book tells the tale of how Titania came to be. Lots of neat palace intrigue with a surprising minimum of actual magical arts, but a strong feeling of wonder and strangeness throughout.

ED: I'm not a huge fan of Gross's solo work, nor am I big on the issues of BOOKS OF MAGIC set in Faerie, but I was glad to see the history of these characters explored finally, and Gross does a beautiful job on the artwork. Every page was a visual coup as Gross molded this fantastical world with well-crafted architecture, lush landscape, and lots of little side stories being told in the backgrounds. I can't wait to see this in color! (I hope that Sherilyn van Valkenburgh does 'em.)

EWC: Actually, I believe it's going to be Tatjana Wood, as I'm pretty sure I saw notes addressing her in some of the margins. I also like the way Bronwyn is careful to carry over the idea that John Ney Rieber explores in BOOKS OF MAGIC that certain magickal rules apply in Faerie, and that these rules are somewhat immutable and should be viewed as a given. I also appreciate the gossip among minor supporting characters, which gives the book an almost Shakespearean feel sometimes.

ED: Maybe it's just that I'm not a fan of fantasy, but this sort of dialogue just grates on my nerves after awhile; I just don't have any sort of tolerance for "cutesiness" or trivialities. That said, I liked this. The story is captivating, and Bronwyn manages to keep the writing in line with Rieber's work on BOOKS OF MAGIC, making this a nice companion to it. I'd recommend it to BOOKS OF MAGIC's readers, and people who enjoy lushly-illustrated tales of fantasy and magic.

I particularly appreciated reading your exchange, Elayne and Ed, because it provided me with a response from one who sounds a little more inclined to like a fantasy-oriented story, and one who sounds less inclined. As you now know, neither Sherilyn nor Tatjana did the honors of coloring BOOKS OF FAERIE; it was the marvelous Gloria Vasquez, who hasn't worked for VERTIGO before, but has long been a star colorist for the DC Universe. We were very happy to have her in Faerie for this special mini and hope she comes back to visit some time! And I'll take this opportunity to announce to all those who've been waiting patiently (and not so patiently) for Sherri's return to THE BOOKS OF MAGIC: Wait no longer! Yes, with BOOKS OF MAGIC #36, due out in a week, Sherri makes her triumphant return, after conquering the hardest job of all: maintaining sanity and clarity — not to mention artistic ability — while raising two small babies. So thanks for your thoughts, Elayne and Ed; hope the rest of the series held up for you.

. . . .

DEAN BLACKSTONE
CAMBRIDGE, MA

Dear Julie,

I picked up BOOKS OF FAERIE #1 because I saw Tim on the first page, and I expected the book to be about him. After I *paid* for the book, as I flipped through and saw it was just a *fairy story*, I admit I momentarily felt ill-used. And then, if I had any hope these fairies would lend any insights into Tim's lifestory, along comes Auberon to deny Tim has the least drop of Faerie blood in him!

"You! Timothy Hunter! Did I hear you name my lady wife your mother?"

"Yes, sir, I'm afraid you did."

This struck me as funny, and very much in character for Tim. As far as he's concerned, he's just a kid. He knows he has some mysterious supernatural heritage, but whatever it is, he never asked for it. He just wants to know the truth about himself — whatever that truth might be— and how not to turn into a monster. He has no aspirations to be a Faerie Prince; he just wants to learn who he is, whoever he is.

BOOKS OF FAERIE #1 made me realize that I did want Tim to be a Faerie Prince, or *something.* I wanted him to have an inborn magical heritage to explain why he will become the sorcerer supreme. But if Tim did not simply inherit his magic from his parents, then what the hell is his story? Why is he so special?

So, see? Bronwyn has snatched away the easiest explanation for Tim's life problem. He's not even a little bit "fairy" anymore. He's something much weirder: a human *kid* with a mysterious future. Fairies are so simple they're trivial. Humans, on the other hand— now, *humans* are complicated.

If that's a theme, then it might be the theme of Titania's story in Faerie as well. What an odd place it seemed, at first, where a snot-nosed human girl could become a Faerie Queen. But really the odd quality belongs to Maryrose/Titania, to the human girl, not to Faerie. Faeries is faeries. Humans, on the other hand— now, *humans* is complicated.

Peter Gross managed to show the same idea in the artwork. Blossom and Cowslip are just pretty, mischievous little kewpie dolls—and they'll never be anything else. Amadan might be a two-faced villain, but that's all he'll ever be. But Maryrose/Titania, she goes through changes! She starts as a gawky, dirty little urchin, then plays the thoughtful, glossy ingenue, yet must eventually become the Queen, heavy on whose head there sits the crown. Her transformation is far more magical than Cowslip's disappearing rat trick!

I know a little about Bronwyn Taggart, radio legend and award-winning editor, blah blah blah, so I know she'd laugh at any comparison to Shakespeare. But when she plays with Auberon and Titania, she makes the comparison inescapable. BOOKS OF FAERIE does have some important things in common with Shakin' Bill's *Midsummer-Night's Dream* besides faeries. It makes a similar contrast between the folktale characters (who *look* so special) and the human characters (who *feel* so much more important). Humans, real and fictional, all face a mysterious and scary future. We wish we could identify with the faeries and the kings who live such delightful lives, but really we can only care about the humans. Because fairies are just fairies. Humans—now, *humans* are complicated.

Keep up the good work unfolding the hidden wrinkles of Titania's life. How did you guys trick me into caring about a fairy story?

Because that's the first thing we're trained to do, Dean. But seriously, I think you hit on an important part of the ongoing debate between those who would like to see Tim revealed to be a fairy once and for all, and those who would rather think of him as human. When John originally suggested that Titania might be Tim's mother, we got an unbelievable amount of mail from readers, writing in to voice an almost uniform "Say it ain't so!" outcry. The majority seemed to feel that by making Tim of Faerie blood, all of the intrigue and allure was sapped from the neat idea of this regular kid having the potential to one day be the most powerful magician. I'm interested in your suggestion (pointed out numerous times, however tongue in cheek) that while we might publish stories about all kinds of otherworldly creatures and critters, there is something much more complicated about good, old-fashioned, bleed-when-you-prick-'em humans. (Or was that *so* tongue-in-cheek that you meant to suggest just the opposite?) Ironic, don't you think, given that — on the surface, at least — the unknown usually seems a helluva lot more mysterious and intriguing to us than our own kind would. Otherwise, how could we explain the popularity of superheroes or mystical characters to begin with? Obviously, everyone has their own personal preference regarding the subject and/or character we find most fascinating (I would probably have to admit a preference for humans on Earth — Now, *there's* risking my license to work at Vertigo/Helix!), but then again, as the humans writing the darned things, aren't we simply applying our own human experiences to even the most *un*-human superhero, alien or fairy? (And why do I feel like I've had this exact discussion in a SWAMP THING letter column years ago?) In any case, thanks for raising so many good points, and I'm glad that despite Tim's cameo-sized appearance in THE BOOKS OF FAERIE, you stuck along for the ride, and seemed to enjoy it, to boot.

Next: Well, okay, there isn't any next issue for THE BOOKS OF FAERIE, but there is plenty more good Faerie intrigue going on in THE BOOKS OF MAGIC. Pick up issue #36 to find Tim showing up in Faerie to discover that much has happened since he last made an appearance there, including the transformation of Molly, Titania, Auberon, and a strange little guy named Huon the Small. Hope to see you there.

—Julie

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